

Backwoods



Home magazine

practical ideas for self-reliant living

May/June 2002

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Health is everything

Exercise

Vitamins

Poison oak

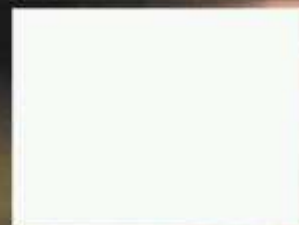
Wild asparagus

Caring for wounds

No doctor or dentist? ... What to do

Special health preparedness issue

www.backwoodshome.com



Backwoods Home Magazine is written for people who have a desire to pursue personal independence, self sufficiency, and their dreams. It offers "how to" articles on owner-built housing, independent energy, gardening, health, self-employment, country living, and other topics related to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle.

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ABOUT THE COVER

This is our second cover in a row to feature a Jackie Clay photograph. For this special health issue it was serendipitous that Jackie wrote about wild asparagus. For, as it turns out, besides being a delicious treat, asparagus has health properties that make it one of the leading fighters of both cancer and arterial disease.

Asparagus, like the spear featured on our cover, are out there on rural roadsides, in meadows, and in abandoned gardens just waiting for the adventurer who will go out to find it.



FEATURES

Health

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Along with a well-balanced diet, a programmed regimen of physical activity is necessary to maintain good health. Richard Blunt demonstrates a simple and fun exercise plan he uses to keep his weight down and his health and physical fitness at a peak.



18 What to do when there's no doctor By Gary F. Arnet, D.D.S.

You may suddenly find yourself on your own for a few days or even weeks while hunting, fishing, or because of a natural disaster, terrorist attack, or war. Dr. Arnet talks about medical kits for the self-reliant and treatment of some common injuries and illnesses.

25 Supplements — it's a murky science, but here's what I take, and here's why By John Silveira

Supplements are an iffy proposition and the medical community is divided on them. But there's evidence, though inconclusive, that says you may live a longer, healthier life if you take them.

35 Avoiding the misery of poison oak By Gary F. Arnet, D.D.S.

Every year tens of millions of us "catch" poison oak, ivy, or sumac. Dr. Arnet explains how to identify these plants, how to protect ourselves, and treatments if we catch the itch anyway.



39 Caring for wounds in the field By Bill Glade, M.D.

What happens if you're isolated and you or a friend incurs a large, even a life-threatening, wound. Dr. Glade explains how to stop the bleeding, clean the wound, and what to do if you're not going to get professional medical attention within six hours.

42 Save a life by becoming a First Responder, EMT, or Paramedic By Jeff Yago, P.E., C.E.M.

You can serve your community and your family by acquiring emergency medical training. Jeff Yago describes how he and his wife did just that and tells you how you can, too.



66 No dentist? Oh, no! By Gary F. Arnet, D.D.S.

Dr. Arnet discusses the care of teeth when professional help isn't available.

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A new breed of sheep from South Africa may revolutionize the meat sheep for industry and farmers.

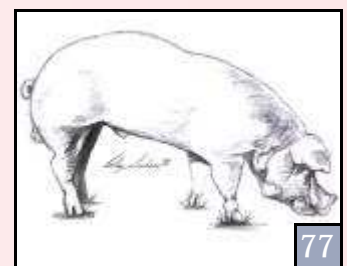
77 The self-sufficient barnyard By Rich Kientopf

You may want to raise your own animals to become more self-sufficient. Rich Kientopf has some suggestions as to what animals you should get—and which ones you shouldn't.

Self-reliance

60 Harvesting the wild asparagus By Jackie Clay

In the second of her "foraging the wilds" series, Jackie talks about finding, preparing, and preserving wild asparagus. She even tells you how to transplant it to a garden of your own.



Publisher's Note

It's a healthy start

This is a rather ambitious issue—trying to talk about health and fitness, both from a prevention and a reactive point of view. You can't cover it all in one issue, so I think we'll talk about health a lot more in future issues. Two of the preventive items we didn't have room for were the subjects of proper diet and restful sleep.

When you get right down to it, your health is dependent on three pillars: proper diet, adequate exercise, and restful sleep. Vitamins and supplements can aid your proper diet, but they cannot replace it. Nothing can replace adequate exercise and nothing can replace the 8-9 hours of daily sleep a person needs. We'll discuss both diet and sleep in the next issue.

I hope this issue at least starts you thinking about the importance health plays in the self-reliant lifestyle. It's like freedom, in a way. It's difficult to be self-reliant unless you are a free person, and it's hard to enjoy self-reliance and freedom unless you remain healthy. The average American lifespan today is 80 years. Barring a catastrophic illness, you can live those 80 years in relatively good health if you take care of yourself now.

Tenth Year Anthology

We've printed a new anthology—the *Tenth Year Anthology*. The ad on page 90 has details. We've included it in a couple of interesting anthology specials on page 99. Essentially you can save a bundle of money by spending a bundle of money. Sounds like double-talk, huh? It's really a good deal, though. Do yourself a favor and take a look at the ad.

Also take a look at pages 91-96 in this issue. They are a more complete description of what is contained in our 9 print and 11 CD-ROM anthologies. The *BHM* print anthologies are phenomenally popular books, sort of like the old *Foxfire* books. These anthologies are better, however, because they are technically up-to-date and accurate.

Fewer books pages

This issue has only one, rather than our usual five, pages of books for sale. All those pages were taking up too much space, so we're carrying only the most popular sellers. The *BHM* website (www.backwoodshome.com) has the rest of the books, plus many more.

Radio winner

The winner of the \$150 C. Crane emergency radio we held a drawing for recently was Theodore Strieter of Calumet, Michigan.

The great Wisconsin energy show

The big Wisconsin Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair is coming up June 21-23. Details are in their ad on page 90. We'll be there, as I'll take my whole family cross country again to attend it. Last year in the May/June issue's editorial I blasted the Fair and the whole renewable energy industry for

catering too much to liberals and not caring about conservatives and their needs. Hundreds of conservatives, some clad in fatigues, showed up at last year's Fair and were made to feel very much at home.

If you decide to make the trip to Wisconsin, I think you'll have a blast. It's the most educational energy event in America. Plus it's very festive, lots of fun, plenty for kids to do, lots to eat, and on and on. Bring me a beer.

Another interesting show coming up is the American Solar Energy Society's conference in Reno, Nevada, June 15-20. I attended their conference last year in Washington, D.C., but I won't be at this one. This is not nearly as interesting to the general public as the MREA Fair, but those in the energy business will find it valuable. If interested you can call the number in their ad on page 82.

Hottest magazine in America

We remain the hottest magazine in America, but the post office has become very slow with the mail, especially if it is coming from the East. It is now not unusual for a letter to take two weeks to come from the Northeast to Oregon. The local postmaster tells me it is due, in part, to all the anthrax radiating machines they have put in place back East.

Last issue for *ASG* readers who have not subscribed to *BHM*

This issue fulfills our six-issue obligation to the former *American Survival Guide* readers. We agreed a year ago to fulfill those readers' subscriptions to that now bankrupt magazine. We did it at our own expense, without payment or promise from anyone. To date, about half of those *ASG* subscribers have decided to subscribe to *BHM*. Thanks!

— Dave



Dave Duffy

My view

Exercising with gadgets — the ones that work aren't what you'd expect

We've all seen those TV commercials featuring all sorts of exercise gadgets that will get you that buff body or that rib-like belly with minimum effort. There are even wrap-around belts that zap your midsection with electronic pulses, allowing you to slim down without even making an effort to move your own muscles. Wow! If only they worked!

But, of course, any of us who have bought one of these effort-free exercise gadgets knows that their ultimate use is as a trashcan stuffer. They work about as well as miracle weight loss diets. They are expensive and worthless gadgets, not solutions to getting yourself in shape. The only way to get in shape is the old fashioned way—sweaty exercise on a scheduled basis.

It's not a bad way to go, either. I have done it for years, and this issue leads with an exercise article by Richard Blunt that I adhere to, with a few modifications. For example, I like to chop wood so I often substitute chopping wood for resistance training.

But I *have found* a good use for gadgets to help me stay in shape. In fact, as I write this I'm on my eighteenth minute on my treadmill, which is a super-handly gadget. And I'm writing this commentary by dictating it into another gadget—a pocket-sized cassette player/recorder. It

is even more useful than my treadmill because it turns the treadmill into a "work station," making it something that doesn't just exercise my body but allows me to continue working at what I like best—writing this magazine.

This is a critical issue for me—being able to work while I exercise. I am one of those people who can't *just* exercise. I have to get stuff done, whether that stuff is working at my business or just catching the news or a basketball game on TV.



Ron Graham

So I've positioned my treadmill in front of the TV, and in a little plastic basket I've taped to the side of the treadmill I keep the TV remote so I can switch between channels or raise the volume when I put the treadmill into a jog. Also in the basket is my hands-free telephone with headset, just in case I get an important business call while I jog. And I keep my high fidelity earphones in there too, in case I want to pursue one of my favorite hobbies—listening to books on tape.



Dave Duffy

I've essentially turned my treadmill into a work, entertainment, and learning center. It's become one of the most productive areas of my house.

I am not the only busy person I know who has embraced the necessity of exercising to maintain good health but who can't quite justify the effort to *just* exercise. Ron Graham, *BHM's* operations manager, also has his exercise machine—a Gazelle Freestyle Glider—in front of his TV, and he typically exercises on it to the tunes of his favorite group, the Bee Gees.

To me it just makes sense to make exercise fun and mentally productive. Otherwise, why would anyone continue doing it? It's not human nature to continue doing things that make us miserable.

I have other exercise gadgets too, like a set of dumbbells, a bench, and a heavy bag, but all are strategically located so that I can do more than *just* work out.

These little electronic gadgets—not the electronic zappers and miracle diets—are the real miracle exercising tools of our day. They help the actual workout fade into the background, and for me they often even extend the workout. For example, I intended to use the treadmill this time for 20 minutes, but I have been so mentally involved with formulating these words that as I look down at the treadmill timer, it is on its 26th minute.

Here's the bottom line: The greatest impediment to people exercising to maintain their health is that it takes too much time and trouble. So fool yourself by making it either fun or productive. My wife *loves* her jazzercise. It's good exercise and a social event at the same time. My daughter loves her dance classes. There's lots of stuff to do out there besides *just* exercising. For the sake of your health, find your own fun and keep fit. — **Dave Duffy**

To maintain good health you **MUST** exercise

By Richard Blunt

Those of us striving to live our lives to the maximum understand that eating a healthy diet can cut the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis. Unfortunately, far too many of us don't seem to understand that a balanced diet alone is not sufficient to substantially reduce the incidence of these potential killers. Along with a well-balanced diet that contains foods low in fat and sugar, and high in fiber, a programmed regimen of physical activity is also necessary.

And the older we get the more important it is to embrace a lifestyle that includes a sensible exercise program. Humans start a natural process of losing muscle and gaining fat at about age 20. This change, though constant, is so gradual that few of us notice it. But if we don't do something to halt and reverse this degenerative process, someday we will find ourselves no longer able to run, go out dancing, or even climb a set of stairs. "Move it or lose it," is the operative phrase when it comes to maintaining a strong, well-toned, and flexible body as we age.

The good news is that losing muscle mass and gaining unwanted fat are avoidable conditions. This is true

whether you are a 40-year-old runner or a 70-year-old retiree. It is also possible to avoid spending large sums of money or spending long hours sweating and groaning in a gym to achieve

results with a self-designed workout routine. I use the following routine, and *BHM's* publisher, Dave Duffy, uses a variation of it. Both of us are 58, and it has kept us in good shape and contributed enormously to our overall health.

If you too are considering an exercise program, it will help you to first clear your mind of all the false images that the commercial media works overtime to implant in your brain. For the past 10 years I've watched many diet schemes and several generations of machines, gadgets, and "surefire" exercise workout routines rise to stardom, only to quickly fade into oblivion. These miracle diets and contraptions are all too often a one-way ticket to misery and self-inflicted torture, and for most of us they are doomed to failure.

Getting in shape and improving your health involves incorporating proper eating and exercise into your lifestyle. That's it. No secret, no magic formulas. I do it, and you can too.

The following is the program Dave Duffy and I adopted into our lifestyles. It works and it's relatively easy to follow. And it's fun for us to do. Hey, maybe that *is* the secret formula! We've made staying in shape a fun part of our lives.



Wind sprints—A treadmill is an effective and convenient piece of equipment to have when doing wind sprints, but as I indicated it is not the only effective method. Bicycling, swimming, jogging, and power walking are just as effective.

the health benefits available through exercise.

With a little understanding of what is happening to your body as you exercise, and a short list of individual exercises and workout routines, you can achieve positive and noticeable

Aerobics and resistance training

There are two key elements to a well-rounded exercise program: aerobics and resistance.

Aerobic exercise develops the heart muscle, much the way weight training develops other muscles. The heart grows thicker and stronger. The inside of the heart grows bigger, allowing more blood to be pumped with each heartbeat. The number of capillaries that supply the heart with blood increases. This benefit helps to prevent heart attack. Capillaries in other muscles increase also, greatly reducing the workload on the heart and lungs. Performing two aerobic exercises, three times a week, for about 20 minutes a day will get you in great shape in a hurry.

Remember, mixing and matching exercises will add variety and keep the fun in your routine. The number of activities that can be included in a weekly exercise program are far too numerous to mention here. They include everything from getting off the couch to change the channel



Abdominal crunches—The abdominal crunch is an efficient way to tone abdominal muscles. Unlike sit-ups, the crunch does not require a full range of motion. It is only necessary to lift your upper body to a position about half way between your knees and the floor. To avoid unnecessary strain on your neck, I suggest that you cross your arms in front of you.

instead of using the remote to running the mile in 10 minutes or less. A quick visit to Dr Dean Edell's website, HealthCentral.com, will provide you with a wealth of information on aerobic exercise.

I rotate at least 20 different aerobic exercises into my weekly routine to keep myself from getting bored. And I change my entire routine every six weeks. I enjoy swimming, playing basketball, ice skating, bicycling, walking, treadmill exercise, jumping rope, punching the light and heavy bag, playing soccer with my three children, and wind sprints.

Wind sprints are a real favorite of mine and are the one exercise that is always part of my routine. I incorporate wind sprints into several exercises including bicycling, jogging, swimming, and the treadmill.

I can best explain what a wind sprint is by describing a 15-minute routine that I perform using my treadmill. I begin the exercise by simply walking at a brisk but steady pace. I remain at this constant pace for about 5 minutes or until I warm up. I know I am warmed up when my leg, abdominal, back, chest, and shoulder

muscles start to loosen up and feel warm. I start my wind sprint by gradually increasing my pace until I reach a quick jog. I hold this jog for about 10 seconds then slow down to my beginning pace. I repeat this cycle 10 to 15 times depending on my energy level.



Alternating shoulder press—When doing this exercise keep your neck and back in a straight line and do not jerk the weights over your head. Jerking or thrusting the weights is a signal that you have the dumbbells overloaded. Stop immediately and remove the extra weight.



Lateral rises—Once again it is necessary to keep your back and head in a straight line. Maximum benefit from this exercise is reached when the weight is in line with your shoulder. The benefit decreases and the risk of injury increases as you attempt to raise the weight beyond this level plain.



Push-ups—The two most important things to remember as you are doing this exercise are: keep your back straight and keep your head in line with your body. Muhammad Ali used this exercise as a major component in his chest and shoulder routine.



Front shoulder rise—Perform this exercise with the dumbbells held in front of the thighs, arms straight, knees relaxed, elbows slightly bent and spine, neck, and pelvis on an even plane. Strive for deliberate and even movements. Do not arch your back or jerk the weights through the exercise.

Resistance training is essential to any exercise routine. Resistance training thickens muscles, and the more muscle that you have the more calories you will burn. Like aerobics, resistance training (lifting weights) will burn calories during the workout just like aerobics. But after you finish an aerobic routine your body quickly stops burning calories, while after finishing a weight lifting routine your body will continue burning calories for up to one hour.

Along with elevating your metabolic rate and strengthening your muscle, weight lifting also increases your bone density. Increased bone density is a front line defense in the war against the bone thinning disease, osteoporosis.

It is important to understand that muscle fiber will only get large and strengthen when contracted hard and often. You don't need hormones or large amounts of protein in your diet to increase muscle size and strength. When muscles are forced to contract, as they *are* when you are lifting weights, they get preferential access to your body's amino acid pools and get all of the protein that they need, assuming that you are eating a balanced diet.

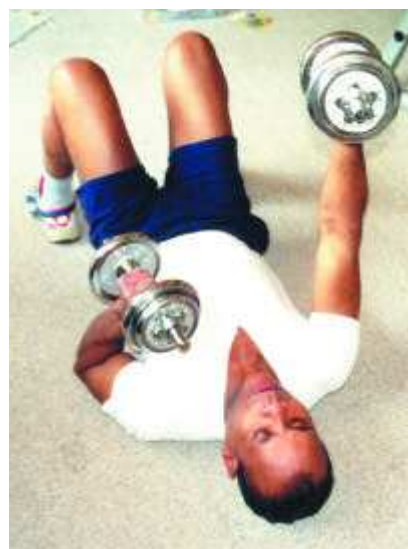


Rear deltoid rise—This is an exercise that requires very precise and even movement through the entire range of motion. The exercise is designed to isolate and work the rear shoulder muscle. When you wander off the intended lifting plane you will no longer be exercising the intended muscle group.

You don't need a lot of weight to do resistance training. One mistake that many folks make when they decide to incorporate weight training into their exercise routine is to buy far more equipment than they will ever need. I believe this is because they have a mistaken view of their real goals.

Weight lifting falls into two broad categories: **body shaping** and **bodybuilding**. The majority of folks who take up resistance training are interested in body shaping. A very small percentage of folks are interested in bodybuilding and are determined to "bulk up" like the guy in the Bow Flex commercial.

Bodybuilding requires long and frequent lifting sessions using heavy weights. Also, it is necessary to isolate individual groups of muscles and work these isolated muscles with a high level of intensity. The small percentage of people interested in body-



Dumbbell press for the chest—Lie on the floor or a bench with your feet positioned as in the photo. Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your palms facing forward. To begin the exercise, hold your arms straight out over the chest with your elbows slightly flexed. Lower the weights to approximately shoulder level, then slowly and deliberately push the weights back to the starting position.

building will gladly make the enormous financial sacrifice and time commitment that is required for this kind of training. But the rest of us can attain high success using a body shaping routine that can be accomplished in a much shorter amount of time.

The investment in equipment is usually minimal, and workouts are

much shorter (mine is 3 days a week, 45 minutes a day.). If you are considering weight training for the first time, I suggest you try a moderate body shaping routine as an introduction. The results will surprise you, and you will probably realize, like I did, that this is the kind of resistance training that will be successful for you.

What kind of equipment will you need to begin a weight lifting program that will shape and strengthen your body? All you need is a set of dumbbells, four 10-pound plates, four 5-pound plates, and four 2½-pound plates. If you're a beginner, you will probably only use the four five-pound plates for several months. With this equipment you will be able to exercise all of your major muscle groups: shoulders, chest, arms and legs.



Incline or level flies for the chest—I do this exercise on both an incline bench and on the floor. I prefer the floor because I can switch from the press to this exercise without changing position. Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your palms facing upward and toward each other when the weight is lifted. Hold arms straight over your head with elbows slightly flexed. Open your arms until your elbows just touch the floor. Now, slowly and deliberately follow a semicircle path, as if you were hugging a tree, and raise the weights to the starting position.



Dumbbell curl—This exercise isolates the bicep muscle. Start with your knees slightly relaxed, your shoulder relaxed, and your feet approximately shoulder width apart. While exhaling bring the dumbbell in your right hand about ¾ of the way up. Inhale and return the weight to the starting position. Repeat this motion with the left arm.



Overhead extension—(works the triceps muscle) Sit on a bench with your back supported, or stand with your abs properly flexed and your head on a straight plane with your back to take the strain off your back. Hold a single dumbbell with both hands over your head. Keep your elbows pointed toward the ceiling and your arms close to your head. Extend your arms without locking your elbows. Bend your elbows and slowly lower the dumbbell behind your neck.

Proper lifting prevents injury

There are certain rules of resistance training that will not only help you get the maximum benefit from lifting weights, but will help prevent injury as well. If you injure your muscle by lifting a weight incorrectly, then your workouts will be suspended until you heal. Injuries to muscles, tendons, joints, and bones can be prevented if you observe the following basic safety rules. They are worth committing to memory.

- When lifting any weight keep your abdominal and buttock muscles tight. This will mini-

mize any strain on your lower back, which is the weakest muscle group and is prone to injury.

- Never arch your back when lifting. Though this will often make an exercise easier to perform, you *greatly increase* the risk of injuring your back.
- Never tilt your head up and back or forward and down. This puts considerable strain on your neck.
- If you perform any exercise from a seated position, keep your feet flat on the floor. This will also help prevent back injury.

- As you lift a weight, strive for a slow deliberate motion. Make a conscious effort not to jerk the weight or arch your back. If you can't perform the movement in this manner, you have too much weight on the bar. Please do not hesitate to remove excess weight. One of the leading causes of injury when lifting weights is trying to work beyond your capacity.



Another triceps exercise—kickback extension. Lean forward and rest your weight, using either hand, on a bench or other sturdy object. Make sure that your back and neck are on a straight plane. Holding the weight in the other hand, as shown, move the lower part of the arm in a steady motion until it is almost parallel to the floor, close to your body. Return the weight to the starting position.

Repeat the exercise with the other arm.



Forward lunge with dumbbells—(works the thighs and the buttocks)

Keeping your back straight, bend your legs and lower your body until you can grasp a dumbbell in each hand. Stand up with both feet pointing straight ahead. Keeping your back straight and the weights at your side, step forward, simultaneously pressing your back knee down until it almost reaches the floor. Return to the starting position. Repeat the exercise with the other leg.



Calf extension—To maximize the effectiveness of this exercise be sure to raise your heels up as high as possible and press your heels as far down as possible while keeping the balls of your feet firmly planted on a 2x4. Begin the exercise with your heels on the floor, then raise your heels as high as possible. Slowly lower your heels to the floor. Do as many of the extensions as you can.

- Develop a short warm-up routine and use it before every weight lifting session. I start my resistance training session with my wind sprint aerobic.
 - Always wear loose fitting and comfortable clothing.
 - Never lock your joints when lifting weights. This takes all of the stress off the muscle and places it where it is of no benefit: on the joint. It is a proven formula for serious injury.
 - Maintaining proper balance is essential when lifting weights from a standing position. Always place your feet wide enough apart so you will feel balanced and stable.
 - When performing any exercise, keep the weights close to your body. Avoid any swinging or thrusting motions. Remember that you are lifting weights, not throwing them.
 - Rest your muscles between sets. I rest for about 35 or 40 seconds between sets.
 - After working a muscle group, rest your body for at least 48 hours before working the same muscle group again.
 - Don't be afraid to take some time off. Every three months I take a week off. No weights, no treadmill, just basketball, soccer, and perhaps a little street hockey with my kids. I am always a loser when I play with them, but it's still a lot of fun.
 - The final and most important safety rule: When you lift a weight it is crucial to breath correctly. Exhale on exertion and inhale when lowering the weight. Do not hold your breath at any time, especially during exertion. Ignoring this precaution can potentially lead to dizziness and blackout while you are exercising.
- Keep a positive attitude, and don't let your exercise routine become a

burden. If you become bored with your current routine, develop a new one that will regenerate your interest.

What follows is my current work routine. I started it two weeks ago and I will continue with it for another four to five weeks, before making any changes. As I have said, varying my routine helps keep my level of interest and resolve high. It also gives me an opportunity to try new exercises that work muscle groups from different angles. Most important, I believe that this type of flexibility helps to maintain the feeling that exercising is really fun.

I perform this new routine three days a week. From start to finish the workout lasts for about 45 minutes. There are four phases to this workout

- 1) stretching exercises (5 to 6 minutes)
- 2) aerobic and wind sprint routine (15 minutes)
- 3) calisthenics (6 to 8 minutes)
- 4) weight lifting with dumbbells (15 to 20 minutes).

Stretching

I do three stretching exercises, all of which are focused on my leg muscles and tendons. The first is a quad stretch. While holding onto a chair with my left hand, I balance myself on my left leg, reach back with my right hand and take hold of my right ankle. While leaning slightly forward, I pull my right leg as far up as possible without straining. I hold this for about 10 seconds and repeat the same stretch with my other leg.

The next two are hamstring stretches. To perform the first stretch, I place both hands on a sturdy object, such as a desk or heavy table. I step back a little, so that my body is at about a 20-degree angle to the table. I extend my right leg far enough in back of me so that I am balanced on the ball of my right foot. My left leg is bent at the knee. Keeping my right leg straight, I gradually push back on the ball of my left foot. This forces the heel of my right foot toward the floor. I continue applying this pres-

sure for about 20 seconds. This stretches the hamstring and calf muscle of my right leg. I then repeat the procedure with the other leg.

The next hamstring stretch can cause considerable discomfort if you try to force it. So please take it easy. If you haven't stretched your muscles for a while, you will not be able to apply a full range of motion with this stretch.

Find a sturdy table or bench that is waist high. Place your right foot on the table with your leg straight. The heel of your right foot will be resting on the edge of the table. With your left leg slightly bent, slowly lean forward as if you intended to rest your upper body on your extended leg. Almost immediately you will feel the strain in the back of your leg. **Don't force the motion.** At a point where you can feel the stretch in your leg—**but without any pain**—hold the position for 10 seconds. Repeat the motion with the other leg.

Aerobics and wind sprints

Next I move to the wind sprint routine I described earlier. However, you have to decide what kind of aerobic exercise works for you. As I stated earlier you do not have to spend money on specialized equipment. If you can swim, jog, operate a wheelchair, ride a bicycle, or use a treadmill, you can do effective wind sprints.

Dave Duffy has a treadmill with cross country ski arms attached. His aerobic routine consists of about 25 minutes on his treadmill, alternating between a brisk walk using the ski arms and several two to three-minute jogs. It works great for him.

Calisthenics

I perform the following two calisthenics:

- 50 push-ups. One again, it is important to remember not to try and test your strength. Do

only as many as you feel comfortable with. Let your muscles, not your ego, tell you when to stop. If you can only do three or four at the beginning, then do three or four. You'll be able to do more as the weeks go by.

- 50 abdominal crunches. To perform a crunch properly, lay on your back with your legs drawn up so that your heels are almost touching your buttocks. Cross your arms over your chest, then contract your abdomen just enough to lift your upper body to the half way point between the floor and your knees. Don't attempt to keep your back straight. This will only put unnecessary strain on your lower back.

Weight lifting

I exercise with weights at every workout. However, I am not attempting to pile on a bunch of bulky muscle that only translates into excess body weight. I am 5-foot, 11½ inches tall, and I feel good weighing 170 pounds. I have no desire to add any more. To me, 10 pounds of excess muscle is of no more use than 10 pounds of excess fat.

The weightlifting portion of my workout is the part that is most subject to change, because I have about 20 different weight lifting routines that I employ over the course of a year. I vary my routine often because weight lifting, for most people, including me, can be the most labor intensive and boring part of any balanced workout routine. This boredom can be compounded when you try to stay with just one fixed group of exercises. It is important to understand that there are an inexhaustible number of exercises that are focused on the development of every muscle group in the body. So it is not necessary to stay with a very narrow group of exercises.

What follows is my current workout using dumbbells. Please refer to the photos for proper technique. The photos are presented in the order in which I do the exercises.

Shoulders:

1. Alternating shoulder press, three sets of 10 repetitions, using 15 pounds per dumbbell.

2. Lateral rises. Three sets of 10 repetitions using 10 pounds per dumbbell.

3. Front shoulder rises. Three sets of 10 repetitions using 10 pounds per dumbbell.

Arms:

1. Alternating dumbbell curls. Three sets of 10 repetitions using 15 pounds per dumbbell.

2. Over the head triceps extension. Three sets of 10 repetitions using 20 pounds per dumbbell.

Chest:

1. Alternate dumbbell press. This exercise is performed while lying on your back. Three sets of 10 repetitions using 15 pounds per dumbbell.

Legs:

1. Quadriceps dips using dumbbells. Three sets of 10 repetitions per leg using 20 pounds per dumbbell.

2. Calf rises. I use a 3-foot piece of 2x4 board to elevate the ball of my foot. This positions your foot at a slight angle, and it makes the exercise more efficient. Three sets of 10 repetitions per leg using 20 pounds of weight per dumbbell.

That's it. If you haven't exercised much in the past, you will have a slight learning curve to learn proper weight lifting technique. But then you'll settle into a routine that's not that difficult to maintain: 3 days a week, 45 minutes a day.

The benefits to your health will be enormous. Δ

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What to do when there's **No doctor!**

By Gary F. Arnet, D.D.S.

We are used to being able to see a doctor at any time for any reason, no matter how small. Will this always be the case? Not necessarily.

There are many scenarios in which access to medical care may be restricted. You could be on your own for a few days to a few weeks. All it takes is a major natural disaster, such as a blizzard, earthquake, or flood, a sustained power outage, or a terrorist attack to disrupt routine care. Doctor's offices and walk-in clinics will close. In a disaster with mass casualties, doctors will all be at hospitals dealing with the seriously injured.

New threats, such as biological or nuclear attacks, could cause hundreds of thousands of casualties. Unlikely? We all hope so. If one occurred, however, there may be regional or national quarantines and doctors from around the country will be sent to the affected area, causing shortages locally.

During any sustained natural or man-made disaster you may be doing things that you normally would not. Cutting or lifting firewood, cooking over an open fire, using a gasoline generator, working by flashlight, lift-

ing sandbags, and any number of other activities may expose you to the chance of injuries or burns that you would normally not face. Improper food storage, sanitation problems, and contaminated water during a disaster can expose you to illness that

The information presented here is intended to help you plan and prepare for the possibility that you might need to manage your own routine medical care and minor injuries if medical care is not available. It is not a substitute for seeking proper medical care when it is available.



Be prepared—You can't assume that help will arrive in a crisis. Know first aid and have a family first aid kit and medicines available before disaster strikes.

you would not normally have to worry about.

Are you prepared for the many situations that could limit your availability to medical care? Many individuals and families are not. During one earthquake in southern California, people lined up outside hospitals for Band-Aids, while overworked staff struggled to deal with the seriously injured. Now is the time to prepare. You need to be able to take care of your own medical needs when no doctor is available.

In life-threatening situations, always seek medical care whether there is a disaster or not. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number for serious problems such as a person who is unconscious, has trouble breathing, has chest pain or pressure, is bleeding severely, is vomiting blood, has a seizure, severe headache, or slurred speech, has injuries to the head, neck, or

back, has possible broken bones, or appears to have been poisoned.

Preparing for the worst

Well before a disaster strikes, you need to prepare by having the knowledge and supplies available to take care of yourself. Educate yourself in first aid and medical care by taking a class in first aid and CPR, available through the American Red Cross and other community organizations. Obtain first aid books that you can refer to, if necessary. Many first aid and home care books are available at

First aid supplies

Disposable gloves	Splint materials
Sterile gauze pads	Rolled elastic bandage (Ace wrap)
Rolled gauze bandages	Triangular bandage
Tincture of benzoin	Adhesive tape
Steri-Strip wound closure strips	Ice packs
Butterfly bandages	Eye wash
Nonstick dressings (Telfa)	Dental first aid kit
Spenco 2nd Skin	Tweezers
Assorted sizes of Band-Aids	Bandage scissors
Polysporin antibiotic ointment	

your local bookstore or on the Internet. Several that cover a wide spectrum of injuries and illnesses include *Community First Aid and Safety* by the American Red Cross, the *Boy Scout Handbook* by the Boy Scouts of America, *Wilderness 911* by Eric Weiss, M.D., and the *Mayo Clinic Family Health Book*.

Next, have a good first aid kit and a stock of medicines that you might need. You should have a first aid kit in every car and a larger family one at home. You can buy a ready-made kit or make one up yourself. I prefer to make my own so that I am sure it has what I need for every situation. It may be more costly, but you can be confident that you have enough of the right materials.

Several variables will influence what your kit will contain, including your medical expertise, the distance to and availability of medical care, the number of people in your family, any preexisting medical conditions of family members, and your geographic location. For example, you would want a *Sawyer Extractor* for snakebites if you lived in Arizona, but not if you lived in Alaska.

To make your own first aid kit, use a list from one of your books and supplement it as needed. When I do this, I make a list of problems I might need to treat and then list the materials for each. For example, you will want materials to treat bleeding and lacerations, burns, sprains and fractures, and medicines for fever, pain,

vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, and rashes. Include over-the-counter medications for any other problems you may have including heartburn medication, *Preparation H*, or *Milk of Magnesia*. Also, make sure you have an ample supply of any prescription medications that you take, along with a written copy of the prescription, which would be handy if your doctor is unavailable to authorize a refill. Depending on your situation and the remoteness of your location, you may want to ask your doctor about the advisability of having some prescription antibiotics and pain medicines in your family medicine kit.

Keep your first aid kit and medicines in a container or pack that you can easily grab in an evacuation and make sure everyone in the family knows its location.

Once you have your family medical supplies together, consider what health and sanitation problems you could be faced with in a disaster or survival situation. Where are you going to get water once you have used up any that you have stored? Will it be potable or could it be contaminated, needing to be purified. What about food? How will you keep it from spoiling?

Sanitation is even more important in a disaster than other times. Diseases can be spread easily so be sure to have soap to wash hands and appropriate facilities to deal with human waste.

Finally, the healthier you are when a disaster or survival situation strikes, the greater the chance that you will survive. Exercise regularly, eat well, have preventative medical and dental care, and be happy.

When disaster strikes

Now that you are prepared, what do you do if a disaster occurs? First, stay calm and make sure to account for everyone. If in an unsafe area, move to safety. Treat any injuries and comfort those around you.

Once you are safe and injuries are treated, stop and think. How bad is your situation? What risks do you face? Is there a continued threat from the disaster? Can you expect outside help? How long will you likely need to depend on yourself? What shelter, food, water, medical, and other resources do you have available? Develop a well thought out plan of action.

Include preventative and safety measures for your food, water, sanitation, health, and safety. Accidents and injuries can occur during disasters as individuals are performing activities that they are not used to doing. You do not need to complicate your already difficult situation with injuries. Try to stay as healthy as possible, avoiding illness or injuries.

The remainder of this article will give you some ideas of common medical problems that you might be faced with. Again, it is recommended you take a course in first aid and not depend solely on this article.

Managing common injuries

Lacerations: Cuts (lacerations) are one of the most common injuries and can be caused by knives, broken glass, scissors, or falls. Deep cuts can damage blood vessels and nerves.

The first step in treating a cut is to stop the bleeding. While wearing a disposable latex or nitrile glove, place several sterile gauze pads over the cut

and apply pressure directly over the wound for at least five minutes. Most bleeding can be stopped this way. Sometimes pressure may need to be held for up to 30 minutes. Nasal sprays that contain blood vessel constrictors, such as *NeoSynephrine* or *Afrin*, can help stop minor bleeding. Moisten a sterile gauze pad with the spray and pack it into the wound for five minutes before removing.

After the bleeding has stopped, clean the wound to remove bacteria, dirt, blood clot, and damaged tissue. Use a 10 to 15-ml syringe filled with water to rinse the wound. This works like a high-pressure squirt gun to clean the wound of debris. Inspect the wound to make sure all particles of dirt or dried blood are gone, as they will be a source of infection.

Some wounds need to be stitched (sutured) by a doctor to help the healing process, improve the appearance of scars, and reduce the chance of infection. A general rule of thumb is to stitch any wound over an inch long or one where the edges of the skin do not fall together. Any wounds that show bone or muscle, are large or deep, involve joints, hands, or feet, or that could leave conspicuous scars, such as those on the face, should be seen by a doctor.

If wounds do not need to be stitched or if medical care is not available, they can be closed with wound closure tape strips, such as *Steri-Strips*, or butterfly bandages. Apply a thin layer of tincture of benzoin to the skin on each side of the wound and let it dry for 30 seconds. Apply the tape to the skin on one side of the cut, gently pull the wound closed so the skin edges just touch, and attach the tape to the skin on the other side. The tape should extend about one inch on each side of the wound. Apply more strips of tape about ¼ inch apart until the entire wound is closed.

After closing the wound, place a non-adherent dressing, such as *Telfa*

or *Adaptic*, over the wound to keep it clean, followed by an absorbent gauze, and, finally, an elastic bandage or rolled gauze bandage to keep the dressings in place. Check the wound daily for infection, which will present as increased pain, redness, swelling, pus, or greenish drainage from the wound. If infection develops, seek medical care since antibiotics may be necessary.

Strains, sprains, and fractures: Injuries to the bones, muscles, and joints are common. Sprains are stretching or tearing of ligaments that attach bones together and strains are tearing or stretching of muscles or their tendons that attach them to bones. The ankle and knee are the joints most often sprained. Muscle strains from overexertion or lifting are common, with back strains being particularly disabling.

Pain or tenderness at the site, swelling, bruising, and pain on movement of the injured area are signs of a strain or sprain. These are also present with a fractured bone and it may be difficult to distinguish between fractures and strains or sprains.

Standard treatment for any sprain or athletic injury is summarized by the acronym RICE—rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Take the stress off the injured area by resting to prevent further damage to the ligaments or muscles. Apply ice early to reduce the swelling and pain. It should be used for up to 20 minutes 3 to 4 times per day. Swelling will return once the ice is removed unless a compression wrap is

used. Place padding, such as gauze or socks, over a sprained joint and wrap with an elastic bandage. It should be comfortably tight and loosened if there is increased pain, numbness, or tingling. Elevate the injured area to reduce swelling. Continue the RICE treatment for the first 72 hours. After that, tape or splint the injured area to stabilize it and prevent further injury.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as ibuprofen (*Motrin*) 600 mg. three times a day with food, can be taken to reduce both inflammation and pain.

Bone fractures are characterized by pain, swelling, bruising, deformity, the inability to put weight on or use the injured part normally, or the grating sound of bones rubbing against each other. The injured person may have heard a snapping or popping sound at the time of the injury.

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between a fracture and sprain without an x-ray. All known or suspected fractures require medical evaluation. Unstable or displaced fractures should be stabilized with a splint by emergency medical personnel or, if not available, by first aid methods before transport to a doctor hospital.



Your first aid kit should include materials to treat lacerations and bleeding. Some of the materials you will want include sterile gauze pads, pressure dressings, rolled gauze bandages, wound closure strips, antibiotic ointment, and Band-Aids.

Back injuries: Muscle strains from overexertion or lifting heavy objects are the most common cause of acute back pain. Pain can be mild or so severe that the injured person is unable to sit or stand. Generally, the pain is worsened by bending, moving, or touching the area and made better by lying flat with the knees bent or supported by a pillow.

Bed rest is the initial treatment. Have the injured person lie on their back with a pillow under the knees, or on their side with a pillow between their legs for 1 to 2 days, while taking anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen 600 mg three times a day with meals. Ice packs will reduce swelling and decrease pain.

After two days, resume gentle activity as longer bed rest can slow recovery. Most people with back strains recover on their own in 2 to 4 weeks.

Ruptured (herniated) disks are ruptures of the cartilage discs in between the vertebrae of the back. Heavy lifting can cause discs to rupture and put pressure on the spinal nerves causing pain which can radiate down the buttock and leg (sciatica). The pain is worse with sitting, bending forward, coughing, and lifting the leg. Numbness or tingling of the leg may

occur. Treatment is initially the same as a back strain, however the injured person should seek medical care.

Severe back pain that is not made worse with movement or change of position can be a sign of a serious abdominal problem, including a kidney stone or kidney infection. Seek medical care.

Burns: Burns can be caused by heat, flames, chemicals, or by electricity. The severity of the burn depends on the temperature of the heat source, the length of time of exposure, the size of the burn, and the location on the body. First-degree burns, such as minor sunburns, injure the first layer of skin and cause redness and pain. Second-degree burns injure deeper layers of skin, causing blisters. Third-degree burns destroy the skin and burn into deeper tissue layers or muscle and are very serious. They can look charred, black, or brown and may be painless if nerve endings have been burned. When burns damage the integrity of the skin, the body loses fluid and is susceptible to infection.

The first thing to do to care for burns is to stop the burning. Put out flames on clothing and cool the burned area with large amounts of cool water for several minutes. Cover

should be called for burns that are large, involve breathing difficulty, are on the head, neck, feet, or genitals, cover more than one part of the body, or result from chemicals, explosions, or electricity. Stop the burning, cover the burned area to prevent infection, and keep the victim from becoming chilled while you wait for the ambulance.

Managing common illnesses

Bad Water: Drink water that you have stored and know is safe. If that is not available, you can collect rainwater, which is safe to drink without purifying. If you use water from other sources, you must purify it before drinking.

Water taken from natural sources such as rivers, streams, and lakes may be contaminated with protozoan parasites, such as *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*, or bacteria, such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Wells that have been in flood waters may also become contaminated with these organisms. City water supplies occasionally become contaminated and there is a potential threat of terrorists attacking our water supplies.

Boiling water is an effective way to kill *Giardia* and other waterborne diseases. Water above 185°F (85°C) will kill all microorganisms within a few minutes. Therefore, in the time it takes water to boil at 212°F (100°C) all potential disease-producing organisms will be killed. While an excellent method of purifying water, the problem with boiling water for drinking is that it takes a long time and considerable fuel, especially if you are with a large group.

Iodine and chlorine products have long been used to chemically treat contaminated water both in the wilderness and in municipal water supply systems. Iodine products, such as *Polar Pure* and *Potable Aqua* work well against *Giardia*, the most common contaminant, but are not effec-



For sprains and fractures, splinting materials should be part of your first aid kit. Shown here are a SAM splint, wire splint, foam-board splint, finger splints, triangular bandage, elastic bandages, and adhesive tape.

the burned area with dry, sterile dressings to help prevent infection. Don't apply any type of ointment or burn cream as it seals in heat and does little to reduce pain. Blisters should be left unbroken to prevent infection.

Critical burns require immediate medical care. An ambulance

tive against *Cryptosporidium*. Chlorine based products, such as halazone tablets and liquid chlorine (unscented chlorine bleach) may be used to purify water for people with iodine allergies or restrictions, although they are less effective than iodine products in treating water infected with *Giardia*. Follow manufacturer recommendations for any of these products.

A convenient way to purify water is with a commercial backpacking-type water filter that is designed to catch disease-producing microorganisms. Water is pumped through a microscopic screen that filters out microorganisms of a certain size. It would be worth having one with your emergency preparedness supplies.

Drinking bacteria or parasites in contaminated water will often produce a syndrome of diarrhea, gas, and abdominal cramping, in the case of *Giardia* beginning about 7 to 10 days after exposure. Nausea, loss of appetite, tiredness, vomiting, and weight loss may also occur.

Seek medical care if you have such symptoms for over 24 hours. Antibiotics, such as Flagyl 250mg three times per day for seven days used for *Giardia* infections, can cure the problem.

Diarrhea: Diarrhea is frequent (more than three a day) loose stools that can be caused from viral illnesses, bacteria from bad water or food, parasites from bad water, food allergies, inflammatory bowel disease, and anxiety. Abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever, and fatigue may also be present.

No treatment may be necessary if it lasts only 1 to 2 days. Diarrhea may be serious if it lasts longer or if there are more than 10 bowel movements a day. In severe diarrhea, up to 25 quarts of water can be lost in a day, rapidly leading to dehydration.

For diarrhea lasting more than three days or when accompanied by blood or mucous in the stool, fever greater

Medications

Analgesics (pain medicines)

Ibuprofen

Aspirin

Tylenol

Fever

Tylenol

Antidiarrheal

Imodium or Lomotil

Antinausea

Pepto-Bismol

Mylanta

Poisoning

Syrup of Ipecac

Rash and itching

Benadryl tablets

Hydrocortisone cream

Cough medicine

Earache drops

Eye drops

Other over-the-counter medicines you use

Prescription medications

than 101°F, severe abdominal pain or distension, or dehydration, the victim needs medical care for intravenous fluids and treatment of the underlying cause.

If these are not present, treat diarrhea by rehydrating the victim with water and electrolytes to replace lost salts, potassium, and bicarbonate. Oral rehydration salts containing the proper electrolytes are available commercially. Anti-diarrheal medications, such as *Imodium*, can reduce cramping and fluid loss. *Imodium* has fewer potential side effects than *Lomotil*. *Pepto-Bismol* and *Kaopectate* can also be used, but are less effective.

Dehydration: Dehydration is water loss greater than the amount the body needs to maintain its balance. It occurs when lost water is not adequately replaced and it decreases the ability of doing even the simplest of activities. Dehydration will also increase the chance of severe shock if an individual is injured.

Normally, the body needs 2 to 3 quarts of water a day to maintain normal balance. Sweating from heat, exercise, or work increases the amount of water loss dramatically. In conditions of heavy activity, 5 to 6 quarts (1½ gallons) or more can be needed per day.

By the time an individual is thirsty, they are already dehydrated. A 5% loss of body water, only 2.5 quarts for a 150-pound person, will cause thirst, irritability, nausea, and weakness. A

10% loss, 5 quarts for the same person, will result in headache, dizziness, inability to walk, and tingling sensations of the arms and legs. A swollen tongue, dim vision, numb sensations on the skin, and painful urination can occur with a 15% loss of water and any greater can cause death.

It is easy to forget to drink or to have inadequate water available during a crisis situation. Dehydration is largely preventable, so plan your daily water needs.

Treatment for dehydration is to replace the lost fluids. Replace fluids by drinking water, juice, lemonade, soup, decaffeinated coffee, *Gatorade*, or similar sports drinks.

Vomiting: Many things can cause vomiting, including food poisoning, stomach flu, viral illness, motion sickness, anxiety, pregnancy, and irritants to the stomach such as medications. Drink small amounts of clear liquid such as soup, tea, *7-Up*, or diluted *Gatorade*. Be careful not to drink too much too soon, which will distend the stomach and cause more vomiting. Once vomiting has stopped, bland food such as toast or crackers may be started, progressing to a normal diet as tolerated.

Medical care should be sought for vomiting that is associated with head or abdominal injury, fatigue or confusion, severe abdominal pain or distension, fever over 101°F, fresh or dried blood in the vomit, or if it lasts over

24 hours. The source of the vomiting needs to be determined and prescription antiemetic (anti-vomiting) drugs are available.

Take care of yourself

Our ancestors had to depend on themselves to treat most of their medical problems. Despite our excellent access to health care, we also may be faced with such situations. Be prepared by staying healthy and fit, learning first aid and CPR, having family medical books available, and by having a well-stocked first aid kit and medicines available. Take the time now to prepare. Your life may depend on it. Δ

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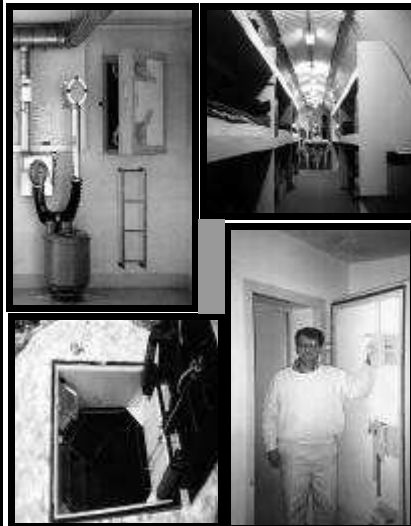
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Supplements — it's a murky science, but here's what I take, and here's why

By John Silveira

Should you take dietary supplements like vitamins and minerals? That's a good question, and the answer is not a simple yes or no. What I'm going to do in this article is tell you what I take, and give you the reasons why I take them. I'll include the scientific evidence that supports my decisions, plus some of the evidence that refutes them.

That's right. There's evidence that some of the the benefits for which I take supplements don't exist, and even evidence that some of the supplements may be harmful if taken in quantities that are too large. I'm betting that the supplements I'm taking may not only extend my life but will allow me to live those additional years in good health. As long as I try to stay within reasonable levels, i.e., where no toxic side effects have *yet* been discovered, it should be a safe bet. The supplements are costing me no more than a few dollars a month.

Also, when you get to the tables, all of the RDA (recommended daily allowance) figures and what I've labeled "other doses typically recommended" are for adults.

Free radicals

When I was young it was thought that all you needed for good health was to ensure you were getting the MDR of vitamins and minerals. (Back then it was known as the MDR or "minimum daily requirements," but today it is called the RDA.) Any more than that was supposedly wasted because it was all excreted by the body. This led to the standing joke that Americans had the most expen-

Vitamin E	
Properties:	Fat soluble. Should be taken with some kind of fat. A certain amount is stored in the liver and the body's fat reserves.
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May slow the aging process. • Keeps the immune system strong as we age. • Delays and even prevents Alzheimer's disease. • Prevents certain types of cancer. • Prevents heart attacks and strokes. • Increases male fertility by protecting sperm from oxidation (sorry guys, it's <i>not</i> an aphrodisiac). • Acts as a blood thinner. • Prevents cataracts.
Side effects and overdoses:	Not many are currently known at 800 IUs or less, and it may even be safe at much higher doses. However, since it also acts as a blood thinner, consult a doctor before taking it with prescribed medicine and tell your doctor you're taking it if you are scheduled for surgery.
RDA:	30 IUs.
Other doses typically recommended:	100 to 3200 IUs. I'll keep mine between 400 and 800 IUs until I hear more. Lately, I've been taking 400 IUs, but as I'm getting older I'm about to go to 600 IUs.

sive urine in the world because of all the excess vitamins we took.

But not everyone agreed with this stand. There were those who said there were greater benefits to be had by taking what has come to be known as "megadoses" of vitamins. They said MDR levels of vitamins and minerals were good for staving off deficiency diseases like scurvy, beriberi, anemia, and night blindness, but that larger doses was the road to *optimum* health.

Back then I was on the side of those who said the MDR was enough, but in 1969 I read an article in a science magazine that detailed results of an

experiment that was meant to determine what would happen if free radicals in the bodies of mice were reduced. Until I read that article, I didn't even know what free radicals were.

The article explained that free radicals are molecules with an odd, unpaired number of electrons. Once formed they are highly reactive and the chief danger they pose comes from the damage they can do when they react with, and *oxidize*, important cellular components such as DNA or cell membranes. Cells attacked by free radicals will tend to function poorly or even die. In effect,

Vitamin C	
Properties:	Water soluble. This vitamin is constantly being excreted by the body so, if possible, either take a time-release or try to spread your vitamin C intake over the day.
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May slow the aging process. • It may help to prevent heart disease and cancer. • It appears to work even better when taken in conjunction with other antioxidants such as vitamins A and E. • There are studies that show it may also enhance the working of the immune system—and other studies that show it doesn't make any difference. • It may reduce the severity of the common cold. • We do know it is necessary for the synthesis of collagen, a protein required to form healthy skin, tendons, bones, and supportive tissues and for the healing of wounds.
Side effects and overdoses:	Too much may bring on diarrhea and kidney stones.
RDA:	60 mg
Other doses typically recommended:	500 - 3,000 mg. I take 2,000 mg.

those cells behave as if they were *aging* more rapidly. In fact, the damage done to the DNA and the cell membranes is part of the aging process. The theory was that if you could reduce the number of free radicals, thus reducing the damage they

do to the body, you could slow down the aging process.

Free radicals are a *natural* by-product of your body's metabolism, plus they result from environmental agents such as smoking, pollution, radiation, spoiled foods (rancid fats), and even

some of the prescription drugs we take. Although they can harm the body, free radicals also serve to help us maintain good health. Like cholesterol, which is also required if we are to maintain good health, it is when free radicals are in excess that they are harmful.

The way the researchers decided to reduce the free radicals in the bodies of the mice they experimented on was to introduce various *antioxidants* into their diet. The idea was that the free radicals would find the antioxidants more inviting than the body's tissues and react with them instead.

A group of mice was placed on a controlled diet, which included food preservatives such as butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), both of which are antioxidants

What they discovered was that the mice in the group receiving the antioxidants lived roughly 30 percent longer than a control group that did not receive them.

That was enough for me. I wondered how much of this BHA or BHT I had to take and where to get it. But the article also mentioned (almost in passing) that there was another agent that may also act as a very good antioxidant, though, once again, it suggested no quantities. That agent was vitamin E. I'd never even heard of vitamin E, but I was sure that as a *vitamin* it was going to be easier to find, and less likely to have side-effects, than the synthetic chemicals BHA and BHT.

I bought some vitamin E and soon I was taking 800 international units (IUs) a day.

Studies and experiments

Of course, that was only one study. Since then there have been many more studies on antioxidants, leading to various claims and counterclaims.

There are studies that claim to *prove* some extraordinary health benefit for large doses of a certain vita-

Selenium	
Properties:	Water soluble
Some of the possible benefits:	As one of the powerful antioxidants, it may provide many of the same benefits as vitamin E, but in smaller doses. And when taken <i>with</i> vitamin E, the two together seem to work together synergistically.
Side effects and overdoses:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhea, garlicky breath and sweat, hair loss, itchy skin, metallic taste, nausea and vomiting, tiredness and weakness, weakened fingernails.
RDA:	40-70 mcg.
Other doses typically recommended:	50-200 mcg. I take 50 mcg.

min, mineral, or other nutrient, and there are other studies that refute those claims.

But “prove” is a word that should be reserved for mathematics where there is actually the possibility of showing something is actually true or false. In science, including the science of doing studies about health supplements, nothing can be proved. Each study simply adds more “evidence” to support one conclusion or another.

Sometimes what the studies and experiments demonstrate seemed to have a macabre irony to them. For example, the evidence indicates that we need B vitamins and vitamin A to maintain good health. But there have also been studies that indicate that some types of cancer may get worse in the presence of some of the B vitamins, and vitamin A may actually *increase* the likelihood of lung cancer in smokers. And later studies may contradict the results of these studies. That’s how studies go.

So it is important to remember that as you read about studies and experiments with vitamins, minerals, food supplements, diet, etc., the studies and experiments are proving nothing. They are, however, providing evidence that certain things are likely to affect us in one way or another.

Supplements and the medical community

For years the official stance of the medical community was to pooh-pooh the idea of doses of vitamins and minerals that went beyond the RDA. But research at various laboratories and universities still went on as researchers tried to find out just what these nutrients did. And there were doctors who paid attention to the results of these experiments.

The eye-opener for me was during a visit to a doctor in Ventura, California. I considered this particular doctor the smartest M.D. I had ever known, and still do. He asked

Beta-carotene (Vitamin A)	
Properties:	Fat soluble. Should be taken with some kind of fat, and a certain amount is stored in the body’s liver.
Some of the <i>possible</i> benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May prevent heart disease and cancer. • May also alleviate some of the problems if you already have those diseases, but there is apparently less evidence for this. • It may also strengthen the immune system. • Many other parts of your body will benefit from it, not the least of which are your eyes for night blindness, which was one of the first problems associated with vitamin A deficiency. • Helps maintain the integrity of the body’s mucous membranes.
Side effects and overdoses:	Can be toxic in large doses. Not toxic if taken in its beta-carotene form. Can produce a health risk if taken with the prescription acne treatment called Accutane.
RDA:	1,000 retinol equivalents (REs). (1,000 RE is equivalent to 5,000 IUs.)
Other doses typically recommended:	5,000 to 15,000 IUs. I take 10,000 IUs because I’m getting plenty from the diet I eat.

what medications I was taking. I told him none, only vitamins. There was a pause, and he asked which ones I was taking.

I told him: 800 IUs of vitamin E, some vitamin C, beta carotene, selenium, chromium...

He interrupted me, and I expected him to tell me how I was wasting my time. Not that it would have mattered because by then I’d already spent

over 10 years reading results of various studies, some of which seemed promising and some of which said the previous studies were all nonsense.

But what he said was, “I know what you’re doing, but you’d be better off with...” And he named the Trader Joe’s brand of antioxidant, saying it was very good quality and reasonably priced. He said that’s where he bought his. His only admonition was

Zinc	
Properties:	Water soluble.
Some of the <i>possible</i> benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men with low levels of zinc also show low levels of testosterone, the “male” hormone responsible for the male sex drive.
Side effects and overdoses:	Anemia, impaired immune system, vomiting. Stay within the limits listed below.
RDA:	15 mg
Other doses typically recommended:	5 to 30 mg. I take 15 mg to supplement whatever else I get from my diet.

Vitamin B complex	
Properties:	A group of similarly structured compounds that includes B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), B5 (pantothenic acid), B6 (pyridoxine), B7 (biotin), B12 (cobalamin), and folic acid (folate or folacin).
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in the proper formation of every cell in your body, particularly nerve cells. • Some combinations, such as B6, B12, and folic acid, lower homocysteine levels to reduce the likelihood of heart disease. • May act as a mood elevator. • Required for your nervous system to function properly. • Strengthens the immune system.
Side effects and overdoses:	Large doses of B-3 (niacin) can cause liver damage in some people. I was one such victim when I was taking 700 mg to lower my blood cholesterol. My cholesterol went down, but my liver suffered. There are other side effects possible including edema and nerve damage.
RDA:	B1 (1.5 mg), B2 (1.7 mg), B3 (20 mg), B5 (5 mg), B6 (2.0 mg), B12 (6.0 mcg), folic acid (400 mcg), biotin (30 mcg)
Other doses typically recommended:	I now take a "B 50 Complex" which has 50 mg of each of the following, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, 50 mcg of B12 and biotin, and 200 mcg of folic acid. I also take separate tablets that provide another 800 mcg of folic acid.

that I should take only 400 IUs of the E to avoid possible side effects.

It was a surprise to me that *he*, a doctor, was taking vitamins and mineral supplements just as I was. He was not toeing the medical line. I took his advice on the E.

How studies work

Since the subject of studies is so important when deciding whether or not to take supplements, let's see just how studies work.

What follows is a summary of a report that, at the time, ostensibly "proved" that vitamin E does nothing to prevent cancer.

In a Finnish study, completed just a few years ago, vitamin E was shown to be a failure in preventing cancer

among smokers. In fact, as I recall, the incidence of cancer was higher

among those taking the vitamin than in the control group.

I found the reported results of this study somewhat disturbing, in part because it contradicted much of what I hoped to be the potential benefits of the vitamin, and in part because, the way it was reported, it sounded so conclusive. So I set out to find the report myself and see how "conclusive" it was.

What I discovered was that journalists are very often extremely poorly informed about science and the scientific method. When writing about vitamins they very often manifest their ignorance. The report turned out not conclusive at all. In that study the subjects were all administered a mere 50 IUs of it on a daily basis. Most health advocates recommend at least 700 percent more and many recommend more than 1900 percent more.

The study was somewhat akin to feeding someone one grape a day, then claiming vitamin C didn't help you when you were ravaged by scurvy.

The reality is that vitamin E *may not* prevent cancer, but this study offered no evidence either way.

You're going to find a lot of this lack of detail when you read media reports of studies on food supplements, as well as almost everything

Ginkgo biloba	
Properties:	You won't find this in your diet. It apparently comes only from the ginkgo tree.
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases brain efficiency. • Reduces blood pressure. • Slows the aging process. • May slow down the onset of Alzheimer's disease.
Side effects and overdoses:	Ginkgo biloba taken together with certain blood thinners may produce a health risk.
RDA:	None
Other doses typically recommended:	60-200 mg. I take 120 mg/day.

else. Journalists like to write conclusions, and they don't like to muddy the water with uncertainty.

Some of the studies I've relied on over the years were based on animals and some were based on humans. Those studies claiming added longevity were, as near as I can tell, all done with animals—mice in particular. People live too long for there to have been any conclusive studies done on them about longevity. Not even two generations have gone by since the question of free radicals and aging got underway. Mice, with life spans of three or four years, can be tested for generations, with their diets and lifestyles controlled, within the career of a single researcher.

On the other hand, many of the studies involving the benefits to the circulatory system and those that claimed possible benefits to Alzheimer's patients have come not only from animal studies, but from human studies.

Your heart

As I said, I started taking vitamin E because of the possible anti-aging benefits it *may* have. Coupled with the theory that it could slow down aging was the theory that, since cancer is largely a disease associated with aging, it *may* also be a cancer preventative. But a few years after I started taking it I stood in a store in Burbank, California, and saw a book in the impulse racks that was about vitamin E and the heart.

The writer, a physician whose name I no longer recall, said that in the aftermath of his own heart attack he had done some research and reached the conclusion that vitamin E could save his heart and his life.

I read a bit of the book while standing there in the store and thought his treatment of the subject was too anecdotal and not scientific enough for me, even though his health and his heart had improved dramatically. I even thought he sounded a little too

quackish for me to spend my money on his book. So I didn't. But I figured, *if* it were true, it was another reason for me to continue taking vitamin E and I filed his claims away in my head.

Little did I know that some 20-plus years later the American Medical Association, itself, would come out with the news that there was considerable evidence to support the idea that vitamin E may protect the heart.

Among other things, vitamin E and other antioxidants apparently prevent the ionization of LDLs (low-density lipoproteins) and this may slow down the buildup of plaque formed by LDL deposits on arterial walls, one of the major contributors to heart disease.

But this benefit does not come without some caveats. For it is also thought that some people on medications, such as blood thinners, may do themselves more harm than good by taking a vitamin E supplement.

So, if one of your reasons to take vitamin E is because you want to protect your heart, speak with your doctor first. But I, for one, was now more sold on taking vitamin E than ever.

Folic acid and the heart

While the medical community still looks askance at many of the supplements, another one they've taken to



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heart is folic acid. It is now a recommended supplement by many doctors, especially obstetricians and cardiologists. Low levels of folic acid in pregnant women has been shown to be associated with certain types of birth defects including the condition called spina bifida in which the baby's neural tube, the canal through which the spinal cord passes, fails to form properly.

But another thing associated with low folic acid levels are high homocysteine levels which are thought to be linked to heart attacks and strokes. A high level of folic acid seems to help lower homocysteine levels and it was my own physician who started me on it.

But while folic acid in combination with vitamins B6 and B12 lowers homocysteine levels in some people, they do not work on everyone, so other measures must be taken with

Chromium picolinate	
Properties:	Water soluble
Some of the <i>possible</i> benefits:	<p>This is another nutrient I first saw mentioned in connection with studies involving mice. The mice in the group receiving the chromium picolinate supplement lived significantly longer. I've taken it since.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May help insulin transfer blood glucose and other nutrients from the bloodstream and into the cells. • May help with high blood pressure. • May lower cholesterol, including LDL.
Side effects and overdoses:	Low toxicity. But stay within the limits listed below.
RDA:	None
Other doses typically recommended:	50 to 150 mcg. I take 120 mcg.

those people. It seems to be another curious thing about these supplements: What works for some people doesn't work for everyone.

Other antioxidants

Some years later I discovered yet other antioxidants whose properties may have benefits. One of them was selenium. In large doses selenium can be poisonous, namely, it can kill you. But in small quantities, and in the right chemical compound, it apparently has some benefits. If it sounds surprising—that something in small doses can benefit you whereas in larger doses it can kill you—a lot of things are that way. Consider salt or iodine: although we need a certain amount of each in our diet to stay alive, too large a dose of elemental iodine is a deadly poison, and ingesting water saturated with common table salt was a favored method of suicide in ancient China.

Like vitamin E, selenium appears to have excellent antioxidant properties. And as has been discovered with the entire family of antioxidants, vitamin E and selenium seem to work together synergistically. That is, one seems to reinforce the benefits of the other

so that sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. So, if you're taking one, you'll get more benefit from it if you take the other, also.

There are also other antioxidants that have properties that go beyond their antiaging or heart-benefitting potentials. One of these is ginkgo

biloba. There is no RDA for this. You're not even going to get it in your diet because the sole source for it, as far as I know, is from the leaves of the ginkgo tree. But among its benefits are that in many studies it actually seems to boost mental powers.

Minerals

The minerals I take in supplement form are selenium, chromium, and zinc. I believe I'm getting enough of the others from my very varied diet.

Synthetic vs. natural

All of my supplements are from natural sources. Other than one researcher's opinion of the benefits of synthetic vitamin E, the only argument I have seen that says the synthetic sources are better than natural have been economic. That is, vitamins and minerals from synthetic sources were cheaper.

Otherwise, the *best* words I've ever seen for the synthetics was that they were just as good, and quite a few of the people in the field feel that even that's not true. So, if I'm going to make just one recommendation in

Grape seed extract	
Properties:	Water soluble
Some of the <i>possible</i> benefits:	<p>There are all kinds of claims about the benefits from taking them, so many that I'm beginning to feel as though they're modern day snake oil. But the claims are largely unsubstantiated. However, it does contain certain flavonoids, notably proanthocyanidins, also called procyanidins that are powerful antioxidants. And there is some preliminary evidence indicating they help maintain the integrity of connective tissues (cartilage, ligaments, tendons, etc.) in the body and that they may help with vascular disorders. They're cheap. I take it.</p>
Side effects and overdoses:	Unknown
RDA:	None established.
Other doses typically recommended:	I've seen as little as 50 mg recommended and as much as 300mg. I take 200 mg/day.

this column, it is to take the natural form, too, unless someone in the future shows compelling evidence that the synthetic forms really are just as good or better.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning of this article, I'm taking these supplements in the hope that I can live a longer, healthier life, though the evidence as to whether or not they will actually help me is still somewhat skimpy.

There are studies that say that several of these vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients may prevent cancer, and there are other studies that say they don't. But there seems to be even less evidence that once you do have cancer that these supplements will "cure" you. Until there are more studies, it would seem that there have to be other ways to attack that disease once you have it.

On the other hand, for those with heart disease there is a lot of evidence that these supplements may help even after the disease has set in.

By now you may be thinking that this thing with vitamins and science isn't an exact science. And you're

right. Science is only exact in the minds of those who don't understand it. To real scientists, science is dirty and messy, a hodgepodge of messy experiments, and data analyzed with an inexact tool called statistics. With food supplements, the science is even hazier and more inexact. Yet, it's the best we've got. And when reading about food supplements, with its studies, its claims and counterclaims, and its theories that try to explain why things happen, you

should bring an open mind and a jaundiced eye to the subject.

This is where all of this stands now. In the future, new studies will provide new information. Some of what seems to be true now will change while some that seems merely speculative will acquire validity. And, naturally, new benefits will be seen for various vitamins and minerals we already know about while other substances will be discovered and have new benefits attributed to them.

Also, new *dangers* in taking supplements will be found. Where I include "overdose" information in the tables, it's not always clear what levels are safe and which are toxic, or even what all the symptoms of an overdose are. Not only that, but the level at which overdose symptoms occur vary from person to person. What is safe for one person may be an overdose for another. So, if you think you're having a reaction to *any* supplements

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Omega-3 fatty acids

Properties:	This is a fatty acid and is fat soluble.
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the risk of heart disease as well as lowers blood pressure. • May prevent cancer. • Restores elasticity to old muscles. • Stabilizes moods. • Enhances brain activity.
Side effects and overdoses:	Few known. Those with asthma, diabetes, or on blood thinner should only take them under a doctor's supervision.
RDA:	None established.
Other doses typically recommended:	Best if you can get it in your foods, but if you take capsules look for <i>eicosapentaenoic acid</i> (EPA) and <i>docosahexaenoic acid</i> (DHA). One or two 1,000 mg capsules per day which are 30% EPA and 20% DHA. I take two such capsules.

Coenzyme Q-10 (also called ubiquinone)	
Properties:	Fat soluble. Take it with meals that contain some kind of fats. By the way, this is also the most expensive supplement I take.
Some of the possible benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May slow the aging process. • Seems to benefit those with heart conditions and may even delay the onset or prevent heart problems. One researcher went as far as to say it strengthens your heart without exercise. • Strengthens the immune system. • Those on statins (e.g., Lipitor) may find themselves with lowered blood levels of ubiquinone that can lead to impaired cardiac function. A Q-10 supplement can correct this. • May help with high blood pressure.
Side effects and overdoses:	I can't find what the symptoms of an overdose are. Stay within the suggested recommended limits.
RDA:	None
Other doses typically recommended:	I've seen as little as 30 mg and as much as 50 mg/50 lbs. of body weight. I take 200 mg split into two doses of 100 mg each during the day.

you are taking, see your doctor, even if you think you are well within the "safe limits" of the supplement. In the meantime, stay within the suggested ranges I've listed.

Disclaimer

(Read me)

This admonition is solely to keep me out of court and out of jail.

Do *not* follow any of the suggestions I give in this article without first consulting your doctor. If your doctor tells you I'm full of hokum, either listen to him (or her) or find another doctor. But, no matter what you do in the end, do it only under a doctor's guidance.

Last of all, absolutely **do not take any supplements if you're pregnant**, unless you get your physician's okay.

Beyond food supplements

Even though I believe in food supplements, alone they do not appear to be the magic bullet for good health.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of other nutrients, many which come under the heading of *phytochemicals*, which have health benefits that are not yet well understood.

As Artemis P. Simopoulos, M.D., says in her book *The Omega Diet*, "The fact that the phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables are potent agents helps explain why cancer studies involving vitamin supplements have had such lackluster results: The pills contain only a fraction of what the plants have to offer. Until researchers can identify and encapsulate all the myriad healing substances found in plants, it is far wiser to eat the whole foods themselves. This way, you will be getting all their

known cancer-fighting nutrients—plus all those yet to be identified."

Dean Edell, M.D., in his book, *Eat, Drink & Be Merry*, supports this when he points out that the French seem to have a diet that most American nutritionists would abhor. Yet, their rates of disease that we attribute to "bad" diets are lower than ours. This, he theorizes, may be attributable to the fact that the French eat a diet that is far more varied than that which Americans eat and therefore get a more complete range of the nutrients required for good health. In other words, don't just eat some fruits and vegetables, eat a wide variety of them. And as to animal protein, don't eat just beef or chicken. Eat all kinds of meat, eat fish, eat shellfish. Vary your diet.

As I write this, the front page of the *Oregonian* has a story headlined, "Tomatoes lower risk of prostate cancer." The story goes on to state that men eating tomato products twice a week reduce their chances of prostate cancer by 24 to 36 percent. Not a drug, not a supplement, but a tomato.

I believe in the supplements I'm taking, but I also try and eat a very varied diet to get all the phytochemicals and other things that are not yet in the supplements. Δ

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Dorper sheep

Revolutionizing the meat sheep industry

by Darlene Polachic

If Henry Soderberg's predictions are right, Dorper sheep could revolutionize the meat sheep industry. A South African breed developed in the 1930's from Dorset Horned and Blackheaded Persians, Dorper sheep are prized for their mild-flavored meat, their hardiness under extreme climate conditions, and above all, their capacity to gain weight quickly.

"Some of our Dorper lambs have gained a pound a day," Soderberg says. "In fact, we had two lambs tested at the provincial Record of Production Centre and one had gained 32 pounds in 28 days."

Until three years ago, Soderberg and his wife Ruby had been raising Katahdin sheep on their farm near Young, Saskatchewan. Katahdins are a meat sheep breed that has gained wide popularity for its mild-tasting meat.

"We agree the meat is excellent," Soderberg observes, "but we found it was slower getting Katahdins up to market weight than we had first thought. Some animals were taking up to a year."

When they heard about Dorper sheep and their characteristic of rapid weight gain, the Soderbergs began investigating how they could acquire some. It wasn't easy. There are still fewer than 200 Dorpers in all of Canada. The Soderbergs were the first to introduce them to Saskatchewan.

"Only embryos are being imported from South Africa," Henry explains,

"and Alberta Genetics was the first to bring Dorper embryos into the country and implant them in surrogate mothers. We saw their ad and went to look at their Dorper rams. We had the idea of crossing a Dorper with their 60 Katahdin ewes. We figured the combination would be a meatier sheep."

They bought the ram in 1996 and some ewes the following spring.

"We liked their look," Ruby puts in. "Dorper sheep are barrel-shaped with a well-muscled back end. They are hornless, usually with black or white hair on the head."

Dorpers are also a shedding sheep, which means they shed their winter coat naturally, thus eliminating the need for mechanical shearing. Their fleece is a short, loose covering of hair and wool, with wool predominantly on the forequarter. Because the underbelly stays clean, shearing and crutching for lambing are unnecessary, an important economic and time management consideration for the producer.

"Dorpers shed from the bottom up," Henry points out. "In South Africa they retain a light coating of wool on top to protect them from sun. So far,



Dorpers are a wool/hair shedding sheep whose underbelly is always clean—eliminating crutching during lambing. They exhibit a compact barrel shape with good muscling.



One of four lambs born on the farm this year from South African embryos implanted in Rideau-Arcott surrogate mothers.

they've tended to keep some wool on top here, too, but I believe when they get more acclimatized, they will probably shed out completely.

"With little or no wool production, the energy that would go into that is diverted to meat production," he adds.

The South African breed has proven very hardy in the Canadian climate and does well in both very hot and very cold weather.

Dorpers lamb out at about 7 to 11 pounds. Mature rams peak at 285 to 310 pounds and ewes at 240 to 250 pounds.

"Their food conversion is excellent," Henry says. "They're a non-selective grazer and do very well on pasture. We give them good alfalfa, and maybe a little grain before and after lambing. But we have to ration grain because it is converted into excessive fat. Under optimum feeding conditions, Dorpers have a very thin layer of fat that's evenly distributed."

Dorpers have a continuous breeding season, and the ewes are known for

their high reproductive rates. Being non-seasonal breeders, they have the potential for lambing every eight months. Dorper ewes have calm dispositions, good maternal instincts, and are heavy milkers which adds up to high lamb survival rates and rapid lamb growth.

Yearling ewes usually produce single births, with twins and even triplets common in subsequent years.

The Soderbergs are very pleased with the results of their Dorper-Katahdin crosses. "The animals have much better build," Ruby says. "We have eaten the meat from half-crosses and it is comparable to Katahdin meat. Pure Dorper meat is excellent, too, and can be eaten cold... it has no fatty or mutton taste."

The Soderbergs plan to shift their sheep production exclusively to Dorper. They currently have eight full-blood ewes, and a half-share in a full-blood Dorper ram.

Their ideal flock would be about 40 to 50 ewes, "but," Ruby says, "the way the demand is going, we may never get there.

"A lot of people are interested in Dorpers," she continues. "Prices are fairly high now because there are so few animals available, and the only way we can bring new blood into the country is through embryos which involves some risk, too, because transplants are not always successful. But the industry has tried to keep prices at an acceptable level so that people can get in and still make a profit."

Full-blood Dorper rams currently range from \$4000 to \$5000. A full-blood ewe will bring from \$5000 to \$6000. Half and three-quarter crosses fetch up to \$1000 and \$1500 respectively.

The Soderbergs say as numbers increase, prices will gradually come down. "But right now the market is so brisk lambs are sold before they hit the ground."

"The industry is looking to meat market down the road," Henry says. "Interest in lamb for meat is growing in Canada. I believe Katahdins had a lot to do with that. They paved way for bringing lamb to consumer awareness. Another reason people are looking at raising meat sheep is because it takes a lot less to feed them. You can feed 7 or 8 sheep on what one cow eats.

"We liked the Katahdins," he says, "but we feel we've found an even better breed now.

"We can also see Dorpers making a terrific impact on wool sheep like Suffolk and Dorset. Wool is worth almost nothing now anyway, and introducing Dorper to the flock would produce animals with much better muscling and quicker weight gain. We don't know yet, but some of the shedding characteristics might be transferred, as well."

With characteristics like this, Dorpers may help breath new life into the meat industry for lamb. These animals will also start to catch the eye of those with small family farms who are looking for more efficient meat animals for the homestead. Δ

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Avoiding the misery of POISON OAK

By

Nothing is better on a sunny spring day than taking your dog and going for a long walk in the woods. Enjoying the wildflowers and sounds of birds, sitting by bubbling creeks, and playing with your dog. Life is great. When you get home, your family pets your dog while you drop your clothes by the washer.

Unfortunately, a few days later you and your entire family develop rashes from head-to-toe from exposure to poison oak. You contacted it on your hike, your dog brought it home on his fur and passed it along, and others touched your contaminated clothes. Life is no longer so great.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, 10 to 50 million Americans develop allergic rashes to poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac every year. These plants grow almost everywhere in the United States, except Alaska, Hawaii, and some desert regions of Nevada.

Poison oak is a widespread problem for both recreational users and workers in the outdoors. It has been reported that poison oak is the number one cause of workman's compensation payments related to outdoor injury. Many U.S. Forest Service firefighters are forced to leave the fire line due to rashes from poisonous plants.

Captain John Smith first reported poison ivy in North America in the 1600s. In fact, later British explorers brought it back to England where it was planted in gardens, much to the annoyance of unwary gardeners. Outside of North America, species of



*consisting of a stalk and three leaflets.
depending on sunlight and water.*

poison oak and poison ivy grow in China, Japan, and Malaysia.

Native Americans used poison oak as a black dye, to cure warts, to weave baskets, to wrap acorn meal, and to cover and protect food stores. It is unclear if they developed immunity or handled the plant carefully, but they did not seem to suffer the effects we do.

Anyone who has ever experienced a rash from poison oak knows that it is something to be avoided. This is possible with some knowledge and a few precautions. This article will discuss the identification, prevention, and treatment of contact with poisonous plants. For simplicity, I will use the term poison oak to mean poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac.

Knowing how to identify poisonous plants is the first step in preventing an itchy rash. Poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac all are part of a family of 600 trees and shrubs that are found all over the world. Many are known to irritate the skin including the Japanese lacquer tree, mango fruit, shells of cashews, and seeds of Ginkgo biloba.

Botanists have classified the poisonous varieties in the genus, *Toxicodendron*, toxico meaning poison and dendron meaning plant. There is some disagreement as to how many separate species and varieties exist, but most botanists agree there are four main species: Western poison oak, Eastern poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac.



Being deciduous plants, the leaves turn red or yellow in the fall and drop off. Only the stalk is present in the winter, but it still has the urushiol resins that can cause a rash.

(*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) is a deciduous shrub that is widespread from sea level to 5000 feet throughout the Pacific Coast from southern British Columbia to northern Baja California. It commonly grows as a dense thicket in woodland and coastal areas, but can present as small plants, or as a climbing vine in shady canyons and riparian habitats. The size, shape, and color of the leaf depends somewhat on whether the plant is in full sun or shade. Leaves are trifoliate, meaning there are three leaflets coming off of one stalk. Two leaflets will attach close to the stalk almost at 90° angles and the third will attach straight with a longer stalk. The leaflets are randomly lobed and resemble oak leaves. Occasionally, a plant may have leaves with five leaflets. Color depends on the time of the year. The leaves are deep green in the spring and summer and can be red, yellow, orange, or reddish black in the fall.

In the winter and early spring, the plant has no leaves and consists of light brown or grayish stems up to five feet tall. Green leaves develop in the spring, followed by hanging clusters of yellowish-green flowers. These turn into greenish-white berries by late summer which remain until early winter.

(*Toxicodendron toxicarium*) is a low shrub that does not grow as a vine. It is most common in sandy soils extending from southern New Jersey to Florida and as far west as Texas and Oklahoma. Found in oak-pine savannas in the Atlantic and Gulf coastal plains and scrub oak forests inland, the three leaflets resemble leaves of the common white oak tree.

(*Toxicodendron radicans*) grows as a vine in the East, Midwest, and South.

(*Toxicodendron rydbergii*), classified as Rocky Mountain poison oak by some botanists, grows as a shrub in the western United States east of the

Cascades and the far northern United States, Canada, and the Great Lakes. It is rarely found south of New England. Leaves are usually trifoliate, but can have 5 or 7 leaflets. It is often mistaken for Virginia creeper, which has 5 leaves, box elder, and Boston ivy.

(*Toxicodendron vernix*) is found in low, damp, swampy areas of the Southeast, Northeast, and Midwest, from Quebec to Florida and as far west as Texas. It grows up to 15 to 20 feet in height. One leaf consists of a stem with 7 to 13 green, smooth-edged leaflets. It has sweet-smelling flowers in the spring that produce cream-colored berries that hang in bunches. Leaves turn bright red and yellow in the fall.

Whatever the plant, all cause the same reaction and the prevention and treatment are the same. Learn to identify the poisonous plants in the area you live as well as the non-poisonous ones that look similar.

All toxicodendron plants produce urushiol (pronounced you-ROO-sheeh-ohl), a toxic resin in the sap of the plant that causes allergic contact dermatitis (rash) in humans. It is a colorless or pale-yellow oil that is in the resin canals of the plant and comes to the surface of the leaves, stems, or roots only if a plant is cut, bruised, crushed, or attacked by insects. Urushiol turns brown-black when exposed to air making it easier to spot. It is not in the pollen and is not volatile, although it may be carried in ash and dust when the plant is burned.

Contact with urushiol resin can occur by touching the plant, touching something to which urushiol has spread, such as clothes, animal fur, or tools, or from airborne particles from burning plants. Some individuals are so sensitive that one millionth of an ounce is enough to cause a reaction.

Five hundred sensitive individuals could have a reaction from the amount on a pinhead.

Urushiol begins to penetrate the skin within minutes of contact. In sensitive individuals, a reaction can occur within hours, or it may take 3 to 5 days. First, a red streak or rash occurs, followed by red, itchy bumps, and then by blisters and severe itching. The blisters ooze and crust over during the next few days. Overall, it can take 10 miserable days for the rash and blisters to go away.

A rash can occur on any part of the body. Areas where the skin is thin, such as the face, seem to be more often affected than areas where the skin is thick, such as the soles of the feet and palms of the hands. Touching other parts of the body with hands contaminated by the resin is a common way to spread the rash.

While scratching the rash and oozing from the blisters does not spread poison oak, the rash does break out in other areas. This delayed reaction may be due to the fact that urushiol is absorbed slower through thicker skin or that it is being spread to other

areas by the hands. The rash cannot be spread from person to person, only by contact with urushiol.

Humans are not born with a sensitivity to poison oak. It develops after our first exposure. The body's immune system builds up a resistance and after the next exposure a severe reaction can occur. While about 15% of individuals are immune to poison oak, most individuals are allergic, with a few being severely allergic. In such cases, they may have swelling of the face, eyes, arms, legs, and genitals requiring medical care. Sensitivity seems to decrease with age and some people who were allergic may even lose their sensitivity later in life.

It is almost impossible to avoid poison oak plants if you work or play outdoors, but you can avoid skin contact with them. Learn to identify the poisonous plants in your area, their seasonal variation in appearance, and how they differ from similar appearing non-poisonous plants.

If you hike or work in the same areas year after year, remember the location of the plants. Spring and summer are the times when sap on leaves are most often encountered and winter is the time when contact is made through burning plants or using vines for wreaths. Around your house, poisonous plants in your yard can be destroyed with herbicides and then the brush removed. Don't burn the brush, as urushiol resin can be attached to ash and dust causing a poison oak reaction to those who come in contact.

If you are hiking or working where poison oak is likely to grow, protect yourself by wearing long pants, long sleeves, and closed shoes. Gloves are handy if you might encounter brush that might need to be moved out of the way.

For exposed skin, barrier creams offer some protection if applied prior to contact with poison oak.

is a lotion or spray developed for the U.S. Forest Service that contains bentonite, a mineral in bentonite clay. This forms a barrier that prevents urushiol from reaching the skin while binding with it so it becomes inactive. It should be applied to the skin at least 15 minutes before exposure and reapplied every four hours. *Stoko* is another barrier product available through industrial supply houses.

Protective clothing that has come in contact with poison oak should be removed and handled carefully to avoid getting any urushiol resin on the skin. It should be laundered immediately. Resin can stay on clothing well over one year and anyone touching it is at risk for contracting a rash.

Pets routinely get urushiol resins on their fur. While it does not reach their skin and they do not get a rash, it can be transferred to humans in contact with the animal.

If you come in contact with poison oak, wash all exposed areas with cold running water from a stream, lake, or hose as soon as possible. If you can do so within five minutes, you may be able to wash the urushiol resin away before it contacts the skin. Within 30 minutes of exposure, you may be able to wash it away with soap and water.

Up to eight hours after exposure, you may still be able to remove the oil from the skin by using a solvent. *Oak-n-* brand *Tecnu Outdoor Skin Cleanser* is a mixture of organic solvents (including mineral spirits, propylene glycol, and fatty acid soap) developed in 1961 as a material to remove radioactive dust from skin and clothing. It was accidentally discovered to be effective in removing urushiol resin.

When you think you may have been exposed to poison oak, but do not yet have a rash, apply *Tecnu* to exposed



*En
out for poison oak, poison ivy, and
poison sumac.*

life miserable for the next

skin and rub vigorously for two minutes to remove resin and other dirt. Then wash it off with cool running water or, if water is not available, wipe it off with a towel. If you know you are hypersensitive to poison oak, wash your entire body with *Tecnu*.

If a rash appears, rub *Tecnu* on the affected area and surrounding skin for two minutes, while being careful not to break the skin. Since you know that you have resin on your skin, it might be best to apply to your entire body to possibly help prevent outbreaks elsewhere. Rinse it off with cool running water, not a bath, and gently towel dry.

Resin can also be removed from clothes with *Tecnu* cleanser. Be sure to try it on a corner of the fabric first to check for colorfastness. Saturate dry clothes with *Tecnu* and let the cleanser soak in for several minutes before laundering the clothes with detergent and hot water.

Equipment, tools, and boots can be wiped down with a cloth saturated

with *Tecnu* cleanser and rinsed with running water or wiped down. Be sure to wear gloves or clean hands with *Tecnu* cleanser after decontaminating these items.

Other organic solvents are also reported to remove urushiol resin, including rubbing alcohol, paint thinner, acetone, and gasoline. These may also be very irritating to the skin and should be thoroughly rinsed off with water.

Once the rash begins, it cannot be stopped and will resolve by itself in about two weeks. Symptomatic care is helpful during this time. Itching may be relieved by taking cool showers or by soaking in a lukewarm bath containing baking soda or an oatmeal solution, like *Aveeno Bath Treatment*. *Calamine* lotion, *Cala* , or *Burrow's* solution may also lessen itching. Antihistamines, such as *Benadryl* 25 to 50 mg every 6 hours, may be useful. Over-the-counter steroid creams may alleviate small

patches of rash, but are not strong enough to have much effect.

Avoid scratching the blisters. While scratching does not spread the poison oak, it actually increases itching and can cause secondary skin infections.

In severe cases or when the face or genitals are involved, a physician can prescribe strong steroid drugs such as prednisone. If used early, steroids can actually prevent blister formation, so see a physician soon if you know you have been exposed and have had severe reactions in the past.

Dermatologists have found that most individuals can be immunized to prevent allergic reactions from contact with poison oak. A several month regime of exposure to increasing amounts of urushiol can give a reasonable desensitization. It is recommended only for individuals that work or live in areas where they are at high risk of allergic reactions. It is not without problems, so consult a dermatologist for more information.

While it is almost impossible to avoid poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac plants if you venture outdoors, you can prevent getting the rash. Learn to identify the poisonous plants in your area and keep away from them. Wear protective clothing and use skin barrier creams to prevent contact. Wash urushiol resins off quickly with soap and water or use *Tecnu* cleanser. Enjoy the outdoors, but take a few precautions to avoid two weeks of a miserable rash. Δ



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FREE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Caring for wounds in the field

By Bill Glade, M.D.

The beautiful remote Canadian lake has provided a bountiful supply of fresh fish. You are cleaning the catch when a moment's inattention allows the knife to slip and create a deep slash into your leg. The bleeding is stopped with pressure; but now what do you do? Where is that kit with the medical instruments? When did you last check them for sterility? Where is that book on emergency medicine and exactly how do you make those sutures?

There is a common misconception that wounds need to be closed in order to heal. Texts on wilderness medicine will include sections on suturing techniques and equipment. They list recommended instruments, suture materials, and methods of making stitches. Unfortunately they don't mention that suturing is an acquired skill and not easy to do, especially on yourself. Also, anyone who is planning to suture every laceration or wound that occurs in a remote location had also better learn the signs of several interesting wild creatures such as *clostridium tetani* (tetanus), *clostridium perfringens* (gas gangrene), *staphylococcus*, *streptococcus*, and *pseudomonas*.

Surgeons divide wounds into four categories: **clean**, **clean-contaminated**, **contaminated**, and **dirty/infect-ed**. The differences between each class are determined by the amount of bacterial contamination expected in the wound.

The first two categories are for patients in a hospital. A clean wound occurs when prepared (cleansed) skin is opened in a controlled fashion and no internal organs are entered. Hernia repair is a good example. Clean-contaminated wounds also happen in

operating rooms, as when an internal organ is operated upon under controlled circumstances, often with antibiotic coverage. A good example is an appendectomy.

Contaminated wounds include open fresh traumatic injuries or surgery with bacterial contamination from an internal organ. Slashing your hand with the same knife you have been using to clean fish or game would be a good example of the former.

Dirty and infected wounds contain dead tissue, pus, foreign material (e.g. wood, grass, etc.), gross contamination (e.g. dirt, manure) or are contaminated wounds that have received no treatment in the first hours after injury.

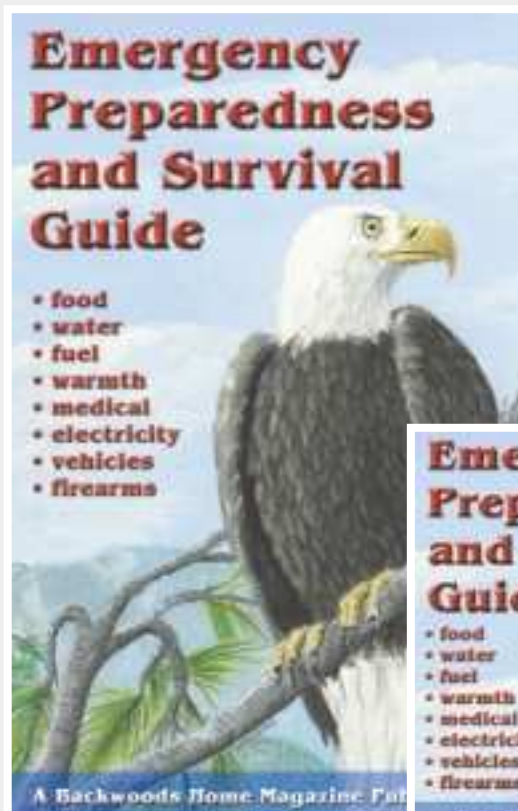
The classification system is useful because it predicts the chance of an injured area becoming infected. Infection rates by classification are:

clean: 1.5-3.9%
clean contaminated: 3.0-4.0%
contaminated: 8.5%
dirty wounds: 28-40%

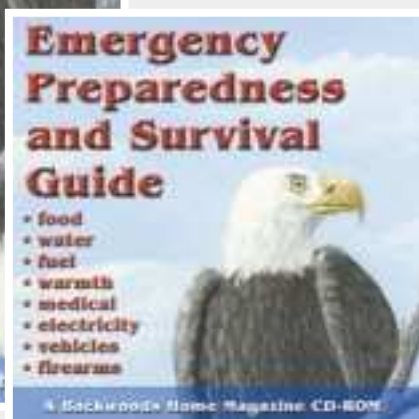
Obviously, the dirtier your wound the greater likelihood of a subsequent infection. This is especially true if you suture up the wound and trap the contamination inside. Bacteria in a warm, closed space feed on bloody injured tissue and are able to multiply rapidly. Using chemical bulldozers they are able to spread into the surrounding healthy tissues causing an infected wound that is red and drains pus. If drainage doesn't occur they can spread through tissue planes causing fasciitis, the so-called flesh eating disease, or spread throughout your entire body causing fatal infection.



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With proper cleansing and antibiotics a contaminated wound can frequently be closed without infection but even surgeons in a hospital will usually leave a dirty wound open initially. This allows the fluid and bacteria to drain from the wound and antibiotics to kill the invading bacteria. After the wound has been repeatedly cleansed and treated with antibiotics, closure can be accomplished with little chance of infection.

Within six hours

The following are suggestions for treatment of a wound which occurs when you are some distance from medical care. They are based on one easy question:

Can you get to qualified medical care within six hours?

If the answer is yes I would recommend:

- Stop the bleeding with pressure on the wound.
- Once bleeding has stopped, gently clean out any gross debris, such as wood particles and rocks, but don't do it so vigorously that it restarts the bleeding. Also remember that this area may be very painful so don't torture yourself or your injured companion. If you carry local anesthetics in your medical supply kit now is the time to use them. You can inject with a needle but it can also be effectively used by dripping some into the wound. When it numbs the site a little, wet a gauze with the rest and place it in the wound. After a few minutes the wound will be less painful and easier to clean.
- Place a sterile gauze or clean piece of cloth into the opening and wrap the site with gauze or an ace wrap. If it is near a joint, try to immobilize the joint to prevent further bleeding and pain.

- d) Transport expeditiously to a hospital. Don't take any antibiotics unless it is going to be a long trip. The hospital personnel will likely sample the wound for bacteria and prescribe appropriate antibiotics. If you have a long transport and carry antibiotics, cephalexin or ciprofloxacin would be good choices.
- e) If there hasn't been a lot of blood loss and the person isn't nauseated, give them some pain medication for the trip.

Over six hours

If you cannot get to medical care in six hours or are in a really isolated area:

- a) Stop the bleeding by pressure on the wound.
- b) Once bleeding has stopped, gently clean out any gross debris, such as wood particles and rock, but don't do it so vigorously that it restarts the bleeding. In this circumstance try harder to physically remove the materials. If you have access to a lot of water, irrigate the area thoroughly. The water won't be sterile but shouldn't be grossly dirty or contaminated. Again, do not clean so vigorously that you restart any bleeding, and make use of any local anesthetics as directed above.
- c) Place sterile gauze or clean cloth into the wound as deep as you can without causing undue pain. Cover the site with more gauze pads, and wrap the site with gauze or an ace wrap. If it is near a joint, try to immobilize the joint to prevent further bleeding and pain.
- d) This wound will seep a lot of fluid and the dressing may need to be changed frequently in the first 48 hours. Make an effort to cleanse the site with water and then replace the gauze pack.

Removing the pack will help to remove a lot of the debris that you couldn't easily get out initially. After several days the wound will not be nearly as painful and the dressing change will be easier to do.

- e) If you have antibiotics go ahead and take them in this circumstance. Topical antibiotic ointments such as *Bacitracin*, *Triple Antibiotic*, or *Bactroban* could also be helpful. I would place some on the gauze that is placed into the wound.

If there has been extensive blood loss, an open fracture exists, or there are other serious associated injuries (head, chest, abdomen) begin expeditious transport to medical assistance or use any available communication to summon help to the scene.

If this is simply a contaminated laceration and you have adequate dressing supplies, you may continue to treat the wound in an open fashion. It will heal on its own in two to four weeks. It may leave a wider scar than desired, but you can later find a plastic surgeon who will revise it.

I recently watched a movie called *The Professional* in which our hit man/hero bravely dealt with a gunshot wound in his chest. In true Rambo fashion, lacking anesthesia, he sutured up the bleeding edges and continued his fight. He was later killed

by the bad (worse) guys saving a surgical team the need to try and save him from his infected wound. A bullet containing oil and gunpowder passing through cloth and dirty skin creates a grossly contaminated wound. Closing the skin over trapped blood, dead tissue, and foreign material creates a buffet table for bacteria. Don't make the same mistake. Pack it open, avoid the infection, and let it heal cleanly. Δ

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on self-reliant living
check out
BHM's Anthologies
beginning on
page 91 of this issue.



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Save a life

by becoming a First Responder, EMT, or Paramedic

By Jeffrey Yago, P.E., C.E.M

Last fall my wife, Sharon, announced that she wanted to take a first aid course and asked if I was interested. I must admit that I have helped at more than my share of car wrecks and always worried about not knowing what I should and should not do during these emergencies. However, Sharon and I were both in our mid-50s with no prior medical training, and the thought of learning a totally new vocation seemed monumental. Like many readers, we live in a rural area, over 50 miles from the closest hospital, and although our children have left the nest, we are facing increased health risks for ourselves and our elderly parents.

Since we do not have any family members or close friends in the health care field, we were not sure where to begin. After many calls and some Internet surfing, we found that there are actually endless opportunities for anyone, regardless of age or disability, to become part of an emergency medical program for your county or town.

Prior to the advent of micro-electronics and radio communications, an ambulance was little more than an empty panel truck to transport an untreated patient to a distant hospital. Once hospital medical equipment could be miniaturized, and voice and data communication became possible from the field to hospital staff, an entirely new multi-level of emergency rescue services came into existence.

In case you have not noticed this gradual change, the interiors of today's ambulances look like emer-

gency rooms on wheels that can now stabilize most patients in transit and avoid driving 90 miles per hour rushing to the hospital. In fact, these vehicles contain all of the life support equipment, patient monitoring systems, and medications found in any modern hospital emergency room. The people you see riding in today's rescue vehicles have a very high level of emergency medical training, yet many are local volunteers, not paid medical staff.

In 1973, Congress passed the *National Emergency Medical*

Services Systems Act which established national standards for all ambulances and ambulance equipment, and defined the emergency medical training required for ambulance personnel. Today, any person you see in a 911 rescue vehicle, including the driver, has several levels of formal emergency medical training.

Levels of training

If you are interested in becoming the "medic" for your family or local community, the first thing you need to understand is that there are actually



*Interior view of an ambulance showing
patient monitoring and treatment equipment*

(All photos courtesy of Goochland Fire/Rescue, Goochland County, Virginia.)



Ambulance to hospital data and voice communication equipment

four recognized levels of volunteer medical training and certification. From basic to advanced skills, these are:

- First Responder
- Emergency Medical Technician — Basic (EMT-B)
- Emergency Medical Technician — Advanced (Cardiac)
- Paramedic

With the exception of Paramedic, which requires some college and in-hospital courses, the other three medical courses can be taken as evening classes at most local volunteer fire and rescue stations, and at some Red Cross offices and community colleges. Although these are not degree programs, you will hold a state license to practice and will be under both liability and injury insurance protection.

If you agree to volunteer several days per month after completing your training, most counties will pay all costs for you to attend these classes including books, uniforms, and on-call pager. Some students taking the *First Responder* and *EMT* courses plan to eventually become volunteer firemen, while others choose ambulance rescue. There are even special volunteer positions that accommodate persons with physical handicaps.

First Responder: The *First Responder* is the most basic level of emergency training and is available at little or no cost. This training is usually given to a designated safety person at many businesses, schools, health clubs, and churches. It is assumed that this will be the first person on scene while waiting for an ambulance to arrive.

You can learn the *First Responder* CPR procedures and the ABCs of initial patient assessment in a single 8-hour class. This is the starting point for working with any volunteer fire/rescue association and will be your first level of emergency medical training.

Human brain cells start dying 4 to 6 minutes after a person stops breathing and their heart stops beating, and clinical death usually occurs in 10 minutes. It should be obvious that it is difficult for emergency personnel to arrive this fast in many rural areas, and even limited medical assistance during those first few minutes prior to the arrival of a 911 team can significantly improve patient survival rates.

First Responder training teaches the ABCs of what needs to be done immediately to delay the onset of irreversible brain cell damage or death until advanced medical care arrives. Cardiac Pulmonary

Resuscitation, or CPR, is an easy-to-learn medical procedure used to provide artificial breathing and manual heart blood pumping for a patient and is included in this ABC training:

A—Airway: When most people suddenly become unconscious, their tongue will become extremely relaxed and settle back into their throat and block air flow to the lungs. Knowing how to simply reposition the victim's head may correct this life threatening problem.

B—Breathing: Falls, electrocution, near-drowning, and choking can cause a person to stop breathing. If not corrected immediately, the heart will also stop beating soon after breathing stops. Providing temporary rescue breathing can keep the blood oxygenated and the heart pumping.

C—Circulation: Circulation is the flow of blood throughout the body. If the body's cells do not receive adequate blood flow, the body will soon shut down and go into shock. This can be the result of a heart attack, high blood loss from an injury, or drug overdose. CPR can maintain blood circulation when the heart stops beating until a defibrillator and advanced help arrives.

Emergency Medical Technician—Basic (EMT-B): The next level of emergency medical training is the *Emergency Medical Technician - Basic*, or *EMT-B*, which is the minimum level of training for all ambulance personnel.

Now returning to our own story. Sharon noticed a sign in front of our local volunteer fire station last August indicating that *EMT-B* classes were starting soon, and she signed us both up. However, after receiving a copy of the textbook syllabus and a brief description of the hands-on training required for an *EMT-B* certificate, we needed CPR ourselves.

I didn't want to go to medical school, I just wanted to know the "basics." We both still had full time jobs and all the familiar professional

and family obligations that always seem to fill up each day. The time it takes to complete the *EMT-Basic* program will vary depending on instructor and class hours per night, but will require taking between 140 and 180 hours of classroom instruction over a four to six months period.

At the end of these classes you will be required to take a written state exam at a regional testing center. The state testing also includes the completion of three different live “scenarios” requiring demonstration of patient assessment and treatment on a live patient in the presence of state certified instructors.

Stage makeup is used to make any “wounds” appear more realistic, and you are not told what the injury or medical problem is before entering the testing room. Our particular training would take place several nights per week for four months, and include 10-hours of emergency room work at a local hospital. The standardized *National EMT-B* training course was going to teach things I couldn’t imagine myself learning in just four months including:

- How to move a patient and scene size-up
- Spinal immobilization and back boarding
- Initial patient assessment and taking vital signs
- The “ABCs”: Airway, Breathing, Circulation
- Human body systems and general pharmacology
- Inserting oropharyngeal and nasopharyngeal airways
- Administering oxygen and patient suctioning
- Treating pediatric, adolescent, and geriatric patients
- How to apply bandages, splints, and head restraints
- Heart defibrillator operation and CPR techniques
- Respiratory and cardiac emergencies
- Diabetic and allergic emergencies

- Poisoning and overdose emergencies
- Snake and insect bite emergencies
- Treating smoke, fire, and chemical burns
- Obstetrics and gynecological emergencies
- Treating bleeding and shock emergencies
- Treating frostbite and near drowning
- Soft tissue and musculoskeletal injuries
- Treating head and spinal injuries
- Ambulance operation and safety
- Multiple casualty situations and car wrecks

Although I think you will agree it would be very useful for all of us to know how to administer these emergency treatments, when we read this list we were ready to quit before we started. To make matters even more traumatic, when we went to our first class, we were at least 30 years older than most of the other students and 15 years older than our two instructors.

Modern building construction techniques and materials have significantly reduced the severity and frequency of structure fires, and over 75% of today’s 911 calls are for medical or accident emergencies, not fires. To respond to this changing trend, most state governments now require all firemen to complete the *EMT-B* level of emergency medical training. If you want to be a volunteer fireman, in many areas you will need to be an *EMT-B* first. Since being a fireman is high on the list of volunteer activities for many rural teenagers, it will not be unusual if many of your

EMT-B classmates are still in high school.

Emergency Medical Technician—Advanced (*EMT-Advanced*): There are several add-on courses you can take after completing the *EMT-Basic* certification depending on your own interests and goals. These include advanced cardiac, helicopter rescue, rope rescue, vehicle extraction, water rescue, and wilderness rescue.

Paramedic: The highest level of volunteer emergency medical training is the *Paramedic*. In most larger cities, at least one person on any three-person ambulance crew will be a *Paramedic*. Although not a medical doctor or nurse, a *Paramedic* has advanced emergency medical training and is licensed to administer drugs, intravenous infusions, perform emergency tracheotomies, intubations, and will know endless techniques to keep a person alive until they can reach a trauma center. Although you can also become a volunteer *Paramedic*, most *Paramedics* today are full-time paid positions due to the extensive training and constant retesting needed to maintain this certification.

Many rural counties and sparsely populated states cannot afford to have paid emergency ambulance personnel who have this advanced *Paramedic* level of emergency medical training, and will rely entirely on *EMT-B* volunteers for all emergency medical services.



Modern emergency rescue ambulance

Helpful references and web sites

Emergency Care, 9/e by O'Keefe, Limmer, Grant, Murray, Jr., and Bergeron
www.prenticehall.com

National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
www.nremt.org/about/nremt_news.asp

American Red Cross Sponsored Training www.crossnet.org

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians www.naemt.org/

On-Line CPR Training www.emsadvocate.com

First Aid Instruction Locator by State www.rescuebreather.com

Emergency Medical Bookstore www.hultgren.org/books/index.htm

Over the next four months of our *EMT-Basic* classes, Sharon and I soon found ourselves becoming very close to what had been a room full of strangers. We studied together, tested together, bound one another to back boards together, took turns bandaging and splinting each other, and sweated out the state exams together. We quickly learned that medical treatment is hands-on personal and that means touching others—something most day jobs do not involve.

After completing the course and passing our exams, we are now working with our local rescue squad several days per month, alternating our time with other local volunteers. Sharon and I have found a wonderful opportunity to give something back to our community, and we have already experienced how very rewarding it is when you save someone's life.

We no longer stand around when someone in a crowd suffers a heart attack or pass a car accident and wonder why someone doesn't do something. It has taken away our feeling of helplessness and is providing a higher level of confidence for our family members and neighbors. I hope you will make the decision to help your own local volunteer fire/rescue station. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, I think the need for your help today is far greater than at any time in our history.

Although we actually signed up for the classes several months before the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, the number of volunteers for many fire and rescue agencies has actually been declining since September 11. If you do not have the time for the more intensive *EMT-Basic* certification, please consider at least becoming a *First Responder* for your family or neighborhood.

If you have teenagers wanting to help their community, I encourage you to let them participate in this emergency medical program. We know several students who took their training in high school, and continued to volunteer when they went away to college. This gave them a second home away from home, a maturity beyond their peers, and added piece of mind for their parents. If you are unable to donate some time with your volunteer fire/rescue squad, at least stop by the station to make a cash donation during their next fund raiser to buy a new ambulance, and be sure to take cookies. Δ

(Jeff and Sharon Yago live in their solar powered home located in a rural county in Virginia. When not riding around in an ambulance, Jeff is a licensed Professional Engineer and a regular contributor to *Backwoods Home* for solar and energy related issues. His book, *Achieving Energy Independence—One Step At A Time*, is available from *BHM*—see page 95.)

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Living the outlaw life:

Are You Crazy? Somebody wants you to be. by Claire Wolfe

According to a 1999 White House Conference on Mental Health, 13.7 million American children—about one in five—have a “diagnosable mental illness.” More cautious government estimates say 9 to 13 percent of our children suffer “serious emotionally disturbance with substantial functional impairment.”¹

The number of people being treated for clinical depression rose from 1.7 million in 1987 to 6.3 million in 1997—and is still growing. Heavily promoted psychiatric drugs have brought other emotional sufferers into the medical fold.

The Children’s Defense Fund says up to 75 percent of incarcerated juveniles are mentally ill and in need of treatment.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that 51 million Americans—again, roughly one in five—suffer mental disorders *every year*.

The number of abnormal mental conditions, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, has ballooned from 112 in 1952 to 375 today. Some of our newly diagnosed problems include “oppositional defiant disorder” (rebellion against authority), “caffeine use disorder” (too much coffee drinking), and “feeding disorder of infancy or early childhood” (being a fussy eater).

Reality check. Are we really all that crazy? Is it possible that 20 percent of Americans are mentally abnormal, diseased, and defective?

More to the point, is it a good idea to let governments, foundations, professional guilds, and global pharmaceutical corporations persuade us that we are?

The big institutions pushing for broader definitions of emotional ills have a vested interest in defining us as badly broken human beings—and persuading us to buy into that definition, financially, medically, and politically.

Why this isn’t healthy

Mental disorder is a genuine problem. Nobody who’s watched a street person muttering to himself and picking imaginary flies off his flesh can doubt that. Hundreds of thousands of more normal-seeming people struggle daily against falling into an emotional abyss. Misery exists. And some degree of this misery may truly fit the category of disease—that is, having a demonstrable, biological cause.

But the trend toward defining uncomfortable feeling or behavior as “disease” and millions of us as “sick” isn’t healthy.

- Sick people are, by definition, dependent people. They need doctors, drugs, caretakers, programs, tax funds, etc.—unlike healthy people, who are self-reliant.
- Mentally ill people also enjoy diminished moral responsibility—which is a handy thing if the alternative is facing and rectifying your bad deeds. Those who once claimed, “The voices in my head made me do it,” have now been joined by TV stars and world leaders who claim, “I’m not a cold, callous womanizer; I’m a pitiable sex addict,” and by executive women who claim that mental illness “made” them shoplift designer goodies.
- The growing psychiatric “pharmacracry” (as Dr. Thomas Szasz calls it) means billions in profits for pharmaceutical companies and an ever-burgeoning demand for tax-funded programs to subsidize new drugs, surgeries, and other treatments. But it doesn’t necessarily mean health for the sufferers, as we’ll see.
- When you accept being defined as sick or defective, you may feel a certain comfort (“Aha, so that’s what those awful feelings are”). But you also accept being defined as less than competent.

- “Less than competent” means, in many cases, having fewer legal rights than criminals. In Connecticut, your firearms may be confiscated if someone persuades a judge, on no hard evidence, that there is “probable cause” to believe you might be dangerous. This law was passed in response to a murder-suicide committed by a mentally ill man. In 1997, when Illinois police showed up to haul rural homeowner Shirley Allen to a mental hospital based on the complaints of Allen’s spurned relatives, they had no evidence, not even circumstantial, that she was harmful to herself or anyone else. Yet, had the Internet not brought watchdogs to her defense, Allen could have been charged up to \$1,000 per day for involuntary, long-term hospitalization and might have lost her home.
- “Less than competent” means you are a less credible human being—even after years of propaganda about de-stigmatizing mental illness. If an authority figure abuses you, whose claim is more likely to be believed, yours (demonstrably unreliable, due to your “condition”), or that of the “healthy” policeman, doctor, corporation, or bureaucrat against whom you’ve made your charge? In fact, if a psychiatrist says you’re sick and you say you’re not, your claims of health are nearly always considered to be strong evidence of your delusional state. The Soviet Union notoriously used diagnoses of “mental illness” to defang its domestic opponents; after all, anyone who criticizes government must be crazy and shouldn’t be taken seriously—an attitude that’s beginning to take hold in U.S. politics, as well.

Disease is whatever we say it is today

Realizing that coffee guzzling, picky eating, and defiance of authority are among the “serious functional impairments” the mental-health establishment is crying alarm about, you might be tempted to think that the shrinks, not we, are the crazy ones. But there’s method to their madness. Getting a condition listed in the DSM is the key to getting insurance companies and government programs to fund its treatment. It’s the key to huge sales for drug makers and a vast expansion of the market for both mental-health professionals and health-care bureaucracies.

In a sense, there’s nothing new here. Diagnosis and treatment of mental problems have been subject to whim since shamans first rattled gourds over the heads of lunatics. Despite claims of scientific advances, that hasn’t changed.

We’ve all followed criminal trials in which dueling psychiatric “experts” state that the defendant is or is not mentally ill, that the illness is or is not schizophrenia, post-partum psychosis, or manic-depression with paranoid

ideation, and that the individual is or is not responsible for his own actions.

If you think this odd flexibility is a mere function of who’s paying the expert’s witness fees, not so. Even within mental hospitals or private psychiatric practice, diagnosis varies insanely. Schizophrenia, for instance, remains a popular diagnosis because it’s basically “a nonspecific category which includes almost everything a human being can do, think, or feel that is greatly disliked by other people or by the so-called schizophrenics themselves.”² One after another, attempts to produce a coherent medical definition of the disease have fallen by the wayside.

Worse, treatment has been as arbitrary as diagnosis. Once, surgeons removed the “stone of madness” from the heads of lunatics. In a more recent era, frontal lobotomies and electroconvulsive therapy (shock treatments) became the answers. Even after it was obvious that lobotomy “cured” people by turning them into zombies, unable to function in society and unable in many cases to care for themselves, lobotomy remained a worldwide tool for controlling unmanageable children and political opponents.³ Homosexuality (officially a mental illness until 1973) was, in the not-too-distant past, “cured” by castration.

Yet few professions possess as much self-certainty as psychiatry. Victims of quack psychiatric cures often note the icy authority with which cruel, arbitrary, guesswork treatments are imposed. Nurse Ratched of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* is no outlandish parody.

Medical miracles that aren’t

Today, in addition to psychosurgery, talk therapies, and the ominous return of electro-shock, we have powerful psychiatric drugs. And many of them do appear to alleviate depression, mood swings, delusion, panic attacks, and a variety of other conditions.

This, according to the health establishment and the media, proves that psychiatry has left guesswork, shamanism, and Inquisitorial cruelty behind and come into its own as a science.

But not quite so. Many medical skeptics (including Dr. Thomas Szasz, perhaps the most famous critic of the mental-health establishment, and Dr. Peter Breggin, who has written extensively against the schoolroom drug, Ritalin), have pointed out that widely prescribed psychiatric miracle drugs do little more than dull the senses and inhibit normal brain function. At worst these drugs can cause crippling conditions like Parkinson’s disease or tardive dyskinesia—“helping” victims by giving them real diseases that put them into wheelchairs. In 1999, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher recommended a class of drugs called neuroleptic (Thorazine, Haldol, Mellaril, etc.) as a treatment for schizophrenia—even while acknowledging that those

drugs cause permanent brain damage in an estimated 40 percent of the people who take them.⁴

Even less powerful drugs can cause emotional disorders as bad as those they treat—jangled nerves, hallucinations, lethargy, depression, memory loss, and paranoia.

In case after case, violent young criminals (like school-yard shooters Kip Kinkel, a Prozac user, and Columbine's Eric Harris, taking Luvox) have turned out to be under treatment with mood-altering drugs at the time of their murder sprees.

Did the drugs contribute to the violence or was the violence committed in spite of the treatment? Hard to say. The real question is, why isn't that question being investigated more diligently?

Scientists have linked specific brain abnormalities to specific conditions—another conclusive “proof” that mental health is now a science. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill bluntly states that the mental sufferings of the millions are verifiable brain diseases. Biochemistry is what ails us.

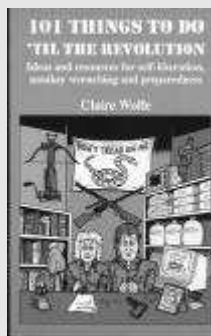
No doubt, some serious mental disturbances have a biological cause. But as neurologist Fred A. Baughman, Jr. pointed out in September 2000 congressional testimony, the psychiatric and pharmaceutical industries made a marketing decision in the 1960s to use the term “brain disease” to legitimize their work—regardless of any evidence (or lack) of physical malady. Thus, to cite just one tragic and profitable example, the number of children being treated for the “brain disease” of attention deficit disorder or one of its variations rose from 150,000 in 1970 to more than six million in 2000 without anyone presenting credible scientific evidence that any such disease existed.⁵

Pharmacrats also don't mention that many well publicized links between certain chemicals in the brain and certain “diseases” don't prove true on closer investigation. (This happened with both depression and schizophrenia.) Or that observed brain abnormalities sometimes turn out to be caused by the drugs used to treat the condition. Or that even a demonstrated correlation between a brain chemical and an emotion isn't the same as a demonstrated cause and effect.

Even where cause and effect potentially exist, which is the chicken and which the egg? Does a brain chemical cause a mental condition? Does the mood, the activity, the ingested substance, generate the chemical? Or is there a feedback loop in which cause and effect are impossible to separate? No one really knows. Yet, in today's deterministic climate, the chemical is invariably seen as the cause. After all, it's easier to “treat” the chemical than the complex individual in whom the chemical resides.

In fact, some conditions are defined as diseases solely because they respond to certain drugs. That's as absurd as claiming that your everyday emotional state is a disease,

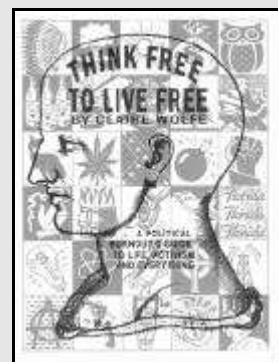
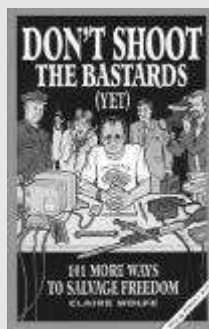
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simply because it responds to marijuana by becoming more mellow or cheerful.

Normal pain or sickness?

Consider the figures on depression treatment at the top of this article. Even experts in the field couldn't say whether the astonishing increase in treatment rates was due to an actual increase in depressive illness, availability of better medications, de-stigmatization of the condition, or more outreach to sufferers (through drug advertising, promotions to physicians, or recruitment of ordinary people into free depression-screening programs).

None of the professionals in the field mentioned a more likely possibility: that Americans are being taught that

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ordinary human unhappiness is a “disease” to be “cured” rather than a normal, sometimes even character-building, condition of being human.

It’s astonishing how often some magazine account of “clinical depression” begins, “My mother died ... and then my doctor prescribed Prozac” or “John lost his job, his wife left him, his dog ran off, and he was diagnosed with clinical depression.” Illness? Those miseries are genuine and may be crushing. But they are illnesses only if we can rationally expect people in the midst of tragedy to be happy.

By believing that normal (if not always pleasant) emotional responses and behaviors are diseases to be eradicated, we are submitting ourselves and our children to dubious, potentially damaging therapies and authoritarian bureaucracy.

Worse yet, we are shutting off essential opportunities to grow, learn, and improve both the human condition and our personal condition.

If you’re chronically depressed, are you sick—or are you responding as a sane human being to a life that has become depersonalized, institutionalized, and out of your control?

If a child is disruptive in school, does he have a brain disease? Or does he simply possess the kind of mind that quickly spots bullshit and screams, “Hey, let me outta here!”

If a teenager feels suicidal, is she sick—or is her despair a rational response to living in a “family” in which both parents are usually absent and television, peers, and impersonal caregivers provided all the guidance she ever got?

If an outsider hates “the system,” is he a pathetic victim of “oppositional defiant disorder,” or is he following the age-old journey of mankind toward freedom?

Medicating these problems away is like using pain killers to “cure” a malignant tumor. The problem remains and grows; but we get instant—if temporary—gratification.

For most of us, negative feelings are our mind’s way of telling us, “Pay attention!” Often they clue us that we need to change something about the way we’re living. Other times, even the most painful feelings teach us valuable lessons about being human. Personal suffering can grant us the gift of empathy and prompt us to behave more humanely to our fellows. It can send us on enlightening spiritual quests. The conditions called manic-depression and depression have plagued creative geniuses for centuries. “Curing” them could deprive the future of the wonders that bless us when troubled artists and innovators transform their sufferings through creativity.

When we accept that every pain should be “cured,” we lose much that binds humans together and much that is transcendent.

Certainly, a small minority of people really do have minds that are hopelessly out of control. Some of them do

benefit by drugs, psychosurgeries, or other treatments. But that’s not the norm for human beings—not even for 20 percent of human beings—and we shouldn’t accept it as being so.

At times, any of us might need help dealing with emotions that overwhelm us or behaviors we want to change. Sometimes, indeed, miserable feelings have physical connections (e.g. “panic attacks” can in reality be heart arrhythmia; compulsive cravings might be the result of nutritional imbalance).

But that doesn’t make every uncomfortable feeling a “brain disease.”

Do health bureaucrats and the increasingly corporatized health-care field really hope to improve our lives by treating us for dubious “disorders?” Or is it more to their benefit to maintain us as numb, complacent, compliant, cooperative, corporatized, hypnotized-by-the-media, consumer-worker-citizens?

Do they prefer us when we are independent, skeptical, and dedicated to healthy, creative, freely-chosen change? Or do they like us better when we depend on their services and toil to support them—compliant and content with our lot?

Happy? Yes, they want us to be happy. But happy as the bottle-bred, Soma-fed, tranquilized, corporate citizens of Huxley’s *Brave New World* were happy.

Me, I think that’s just plain crazy.

(Thank you to psychologist Sunni Maravillosa, Ph.D. for assistance with this article.)

¹ National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

(<http://www.nami.org/fact.htm>) quoting from Friedman, R.M., et. Al. “Prevalence of Serious Emotional Disturbance in Children and Adolescents,” *Mental Health, United States, 1996*. Center for Mental Health Services, Rockville, MD.

² Stevens, Lawrence, J.D. “Schizophrenia: A Nonexistent Disease.”

Published at <http://www.antipsychiatry.org/SCHIZOPH.HTM>.

³ Sabbatini, Renato M.E., Ph.D. “The History of Psychosurgery.”

June 14, 1997, State University of Campinas, Brazil, http://www.epub.org.br/cm/n02/historia/psicocirg_i.htm.

⁴ Stevens, op.cit. (1999 update)

⁵ Baughman, Fred. A, Jr., M.D. “The Rise and Fall of ADD/ADHD,” September 25, 2000. Δ

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Ayoob on Firearms:

Political activism, backwoods style

People don't seek the backwoods home lifestyle so they can become involved in politics. Indeed, it's usually just the opposite. But sometimes, the politics come to you. When that happens, it takes people of strong ethical fiber to stand up and be counted and speak for freedom and individuality.

I'm typing this on a laptop on the second floor of the rustic Lions Club in Eagle River, Alaska. A floor below, teeming throngs are packed shoulder to shoulder at the Eagle River Gun Show. Amidst the displays of fine firearms and knives, there is but one booth that represents a political candidate, and there the Alaskans are packed three deep. It is the booth of Wayne Anthony Ross, Republican candidate for Governor.

Wayne and his lovely wife, Barb, came to Alaska in the late 1960s, right after Wayne graduated from law school. They built a beautiful country home on a hillside overlooking Anchorage, on what was then only a mountain slope covered with scrub wood. As Wayne and Barb raised their kids, they watched the lifestyle they had come for, that of the Last Frontier, be slowly subsumed by the infiltration of corporate influence and Yuppified values that crept up from the "lower 48."

Wayne decided to do something about it.

W.A.R. at war

Those who know him don't think the fact that Wayne Anthony Ross's initials spell "WAR" is a coincidence. He is not afraid to fight to the wall for things he believes in.

I had known about him for years. As an NRA Life Member, I get to vote for the organization's Board of Directors. Wayne has served there for all but one year as a Director, rising to the position of First Vice President in the early 90s. In more than a score of years fighting for the civil rights of gun owners nationwide, he never lost sight of the situation in his native state.

The current Governor of Alaska, Tony Knowles, has won as many terms in Juneau as state law allows. In the immediately coming election, he has thrown his support to his Lieutenant Governor, Fran Ulmer, the pre-ordained Democratic gubernatorial nominee. Ms. Ulmer is by all accounts a nice lady and a good person. She has also been the long-serving right hand of her mentor Knowles, to the point where many from both parties are known to refer to her as "little Tony."

An Ulmer victory would not bode well for the civil rights of gun owners, nor of those who feel they have a right to honestly harvest Nature's bounty to feed their families. Governor Knowles in the past ordered the destruction by welding torch of thousands upon thousands of dollars worth of fine firearms. Some were confiscated from criminal suspects, while others were recovered stolen property. Many were surplus state-owned service handguns purchased for issue to state troopers and state Fish & Wildlife officers.

When Ross, a respected trial lawyer in Anchorage who at one time worked for the State Attorney General's Office, found out about this he sought a court order to cease and



Massad Ayoob

desist. The judge did not issue the order because a representative of the AG's office told him that the Governor only intended to destroy "Saturday Night Specials" and "sawed-off shotguns."

Ross later came into possession of more than 50 of the guns that had been put to the torch. They included fine-quality Smith & Wesson, Ruger, and Colt .357 Magnums, and such valuable collectibles as the Colt Woodsman .22 pistol and the .22 Hornet pilot's survival rifle. A number of the torched guns were Smith & Wesson Model 686 .357s as issued to state law enforcement officers prior to the transition to the .40 caliber Smith & Wesson auto pistol. Some appear to have been brand new.

The Governor's office was saying that guns were bad and could not be sold to legitimate dealers for resale to law-abiding citizens, as had long

been the custom in Alaska. Governor Knowles was also wasting many thousands of dollars worth of taxpayers' money.

Outraged, Ross amended his complaint to seek damages from the governor personally. To make a long story short, he won. The Governor and the State agreed to cease and desist in their destruction of valuable publicly-owned property. Today, thanks to Wayne Ross, the state has returned to the practice of selling surplus firearms to licensed dealers who in turn can re-sell to honest individual citizens.

Many of the guns that Ross had saved were traded in for the Smith & Wesson Model 4006 now issued to the Alaska state troopers. Ironically, a local newspaper carried a photo of the anti-gun governor firing one of the new pistols, and taking credit for his frugality with the taxpayers' money by getting so much in trade for the state's previous guns.

In the mid-1990s, the Alaska State House passed a bill that would provide "shall issue" concealed carry permits to private citizens in Alaska. The need to carry firearms for personal defense is palpable. Attacks on humans by bear and even angry moose are well documented in Alaska, and when human predators strike, the police are seldom present. They can't be. The state is twice as big as Texas and has only a little over 300 state troopers. Local law enforcement is also thinly spread. At this writing, the city of Anchorage employs only 320 armed police officers to protect 260,000 people within city limits roughly the size of the state of Delaware.

State representatives and senators saw the wisdom of concealed carry and passed this reasonable law. Governor Tony Knowles vetoed it. Fortunately, there were enough votes in the state house to override the veto, and today Alaskans are safer because they have the option of carrying

loaded and concealed handguns for personal protection.

Ross had been a staunch supporter of the shall-issue concealed carry law. He pledges that, if elected, he will instruct the state Attorney General to recognize more out-of-state concealed carry permits than the few currently accepted. This will also



Alaskan gubernatorial candidate Wayne Ross fought for concealed carry privileges in Alaska, and he will broaden them if elected; the current administration vetoed the bill but it was overridden. Note S&W .357 in waistband.

increase the options of Alaskans, whose permits will now be recognized in many more of the "Lower 48" states through such an agreement.

The subsistence issue

Alaska's wealth of game and fish is legendary. Priority of access to these resources has for many years been given to Alaska Natives. Under present Federal law, those in rural areas have access and those who live in or near cities do not. Unfortunately, Alaska is a notoriously expensive place to live, and it is no secret that two of the state's primary industries, oil and commercial fishing, have

been in the doldrums of late. A great many Alaska Natives are now living below the poverty level and would greatly benefit from being able to feed their family salmon they had caught and moose and caribou they had harvested. If their zip code is in an urban area, their access is restricted.

Wayne Ross wants to change that. Here's what he has to say on what many consider the most important issue in the state right now, the matter of subsistence:

"No issue has been more misrepresented to Alaskans by campaigning politicians than 'Subsistence.' I want to set the record straight.

"Federal law and regulations contradict the constitutionally guaranteed equal right of all Alaska citizens to use our fish and game resources. That right was recognized by the federal government when our Statehood Compact was accepted. The only way to reclaim our state's rights is to challenge the *Alaska Lands Act* in court or get Congress to change it without a court challenge. I am committed to doing whichever it takes.

"Proposed constitutional amendments divide us further and do not begin to solve the real problem. The solution must unite us, not divide us. The subsistence rights of all Alaskans must be protected. When a particular resource is scarce, it should be Alaskans that determine priorities. Those priorities should be based solely on need.

"Alaskans are good people and can manage our wildlife resources fairly and responsibly without Federal interference controlled by special interests."

Realpolitik

Political reality—what Richard Nixon called realpolitik—puts Ross in an interesting position. His current race for Governor is his second. During the primaries he came in close behind a Republican who, because of

campaign fraud, was later taken by Tony Knowles like Grant took Richmond. In the current race, published "official" polls show him a strong second to veteran Republican US Senator Frank Murkowski. Private polls show the race for the Republican gubernatorial nomination to be even closer than that.

Alaskan journalists proclaim the voters in their state to be a singular breed. Iconoclastic, independent to the point where "maverick" is not too strong a term, and above all, well imbued with common sense. In talking with countless Alaskans during more than a week there, I was struck by how many consider Murkowski's throwing his hat in the gubernatorial ring to be a bad move that ill serves the people there.

Alaska's other senator is Ted Stevens. I've met the man, and I'm impressed by him. He's pro-gun, pro-individual rights for the most part, and has used his high seniority in the Senate to good advantage on behalf of his constituents. In short, he has brought home a helluva lot of Washington pork.

Murkowski is the junior senator from Alaska, but is nonetheless one of the most senior and well-respected members of the United States Senate. Throwing away that hard-earned clout in the nation's Capitol to re-invent himself as Governor of Alaska is an act that puzzles most who voted for him. They see him as one of their two strong Washington connections, and have no reason to believe that he is up to speed on state issues.

Ross, on the other hand, is recognized as being not only on top of important issues at the state level, but a prime mover in fighting for the citi-

zens against government encroachment of their rights. The *Anchorage Daily News* recently editorialized about the fuzziness of the senator on critical local matters.



Many of the guns destroyed as "Saturday Night Specials" by the Knowles/Ulmer administration were these S&W Model 686 revolvers, the model purchased for state troopers and conservation officers at taxpayer expense.

Consider campaign financing. While I was in Anchorage, President Bush flew in for a thousand-dollar-a-plate dinner to raise funds for Murkowski. At that same time, Wayne Ross was accepting \$25 contributions from one citizen at a time.

Says Ross, "Alaska has some of the strongest campaign finance laws in the country. Corporate money is largely banned and individual contributions are limited to \$500 per year. Even so, special interests aggregating their resources give a distinct advan-

tage to candidates they wish to appoint to high office. Special interest influence dominates the decisions of establishment candidates, effectively suppressing the ability of ordinary Alaskans to have a say in how our state is managed."

Promises Ross, "This is not how I will manage the Governor's office. I will represent everyone equally and fairly. I am not an establishment political candidate who expects you to fork over \$1,000 or \$500 to shake my hand at a fundraiser...I am honored to accept the legal maximum of \$500 from my committed supporters who can afford it, but I know that many of my supporters are the hard working people who make Alaska strong and just don't have that kind of money to throw around. We are campaigning, and will win this election, with the support of regular Alaskans who help us with \$25, \$50, \$100, or \$250."

Can Wayne Anthony Ross win against the might of the political machines? He's the underdog, but I absolutely think he can do it. His opponents are getting iceberg size chunks of campaign funds and Ross is getting his support one voter at a time. He is beholden to no special interest group, including even the NRA, which surprisingly has offered him no financial support. He cannot afford the media blitz advertising campaigns of his opponents.

But, the debates are coming.

The last time he debated the current governor, Ross caught him waffling and nailed him to the wall in public. Exposing what he called the governor's "weasel words," Ross flat out said that this was the sort of thing he was fed up with from incumbent

politicians, and the reason he was running for office. The press declared Ross the clear winner of the debate, and Governor Knowles has refused to discuss the issues with him in a public forum ever since.

A soft-spoken "ordinary guy" in person, Wayne Ross is also a master trial lawyer. He is famous among the local bar for a case he argued for an Alaska businessman against outside special interests in Federal Bankruptcy Court in Seattle. A cadre of high-powered "LA Law" types in thousand dollar suits went first, reeling off a list of caselaw citations as they advocated for the fat cats. Then Ross stood up in what he calls his "Alaska Tuxedo," a whipcord suit and flannel shirt with a string tie, and began to speak. He didn't even touch the caselaw. Instead, he spoke movingly and logically about common sense as seen by the ordinary reasonable, prudent, and fair citizen.

The court ruled in Ross's favor.

Let me tell you another true story. It was the case in which I got to know Wayne Ross. An elderly, disabled war veteran lived in a modest trailer home on the edge of Anchorage. He found a man dressed in black and wearing a ski mask standing silently at the inner door of his house, peering through the window. The senior citizen grabbed his Ruger .357 and confronted the intruder, who ran. The citizen ordered the suspect to halt, and when the menacing figure turned on him suddenly and made a motion as if drawing a gun, the old man fired one shot. The shot wounded what turned out to be an unarmed 14-year-old boy, who never did explain why he made that terrifying movement.

The prosecutor, a state employee working at the direction of an AG who took orders from the anti-gun governor, charged the old man with Assault in the First Degree. Under the Alaska guidelines, this serious felony would have sent the old man to the

state penitentiary for eight years. Knowing that the old vet had no money to pay him, Wayne Ross took the case anyway. To make another long story short, the old man is free thanks to an honest lawyer who didn't feel he needed to be paid to prevent a terrible injustice.

Backwoods civics lesson

It will be interesting to follow the campaign of Wayne Ross, the homesteader and outdoorsman who literally "took politics into his own hands" on behalf of people like those who read this magazine who happen to live in Alaska. I for one would not be surprised to see an upset victory in the August gubernatorial primary, and to see Ross emerge as the official

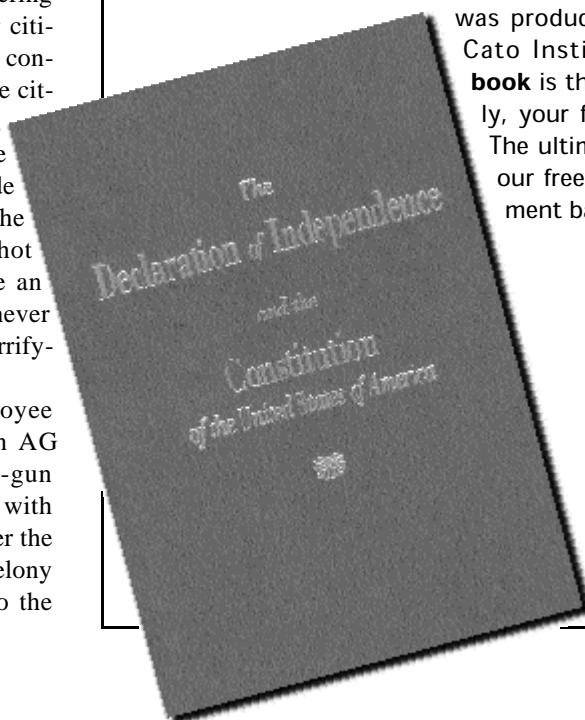
Republican nominee to challenge the Democrats for the governor's mansion they have occupied for so long.

If it happens, it will be a victory for individuality and individual rights, and a triumph of honesty, common sense, and civic commitment over "politics as usual." It was a pleasure for me to take some unpaid time from the police training assignment that brought me to Alaska to campaign for a man who is a genuine American original.

If you're interested in supporting this most worthwhile candidacy, boot up your computer to www.rossforgovernor.com, or write for information to Ross For Governor 2002, PO Box 240425, Anchorage, AK 99524-0425. Δ

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THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a continuing feature in **Backwoods Home Magazine**. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share to BHM, P.O. Box 712, Gold Beach, OR 97444. There is no payment for jokes used.)

Fatal things to say to your pregnant wife

"Hey, when you're finished puckin' in there, get me a beer, willya?"

"That's not a bun in the oven—it's the whole friggin' bakery."

"Sweetheart, where'd you put that Victoria's Secret catalog?"

"Roseann, what have you done with my wife?"

"You don't have the guts to pull the trigger, Lardass."

O'Malley moved from Ireland to New York and the first thing he did was find a bar. He went in, ordered three beers, then retired to a booth and drank a little from one, then the second, then the third. He continued this until all three beers were gone.

After that, he showed up everyday, ordered three beers, and drank them the same way.

After a month of this the bartender finally said, "It's none of my business, but the way you order your beer, by the time you finish the last one it's got to be warm and flat."

O'Malley replied, "When I lived in Ireland my two brothers and I went to the local pub after work every day and each had a pint and we always vowed that should we ever separate we'd still order three beers and drink them, even if we were alone."

"Oh," the bartender nodded. "Now I understand."

O'Malley continued to show up every day and order three beers until, one day, he came in and ordered just two. He took them back to a booth and proceeded to drink them.

The bartender watched him for a few minutes, then went around the bar and approached his booth. "May I give you my condolences?" he asked.

"For what?" O'Malley asked.

"Well, I see you ordered only two beers today, so I figure something happened to one of your brothers."

"Oh, no," O'Malley exclaimed. "I just married a Baptist and she made me give up drinking. But that in no way affects my brothers."

Airport Screening

To ensure we Americans never offend anyone—particularly fanatics intent on killing us (and liberals)—airport screeners will not be allowed to profile people. They will continue random searches of 80-year-old women, little kids, airline pilots with proper identification, and 85-year old Congressmen with metal hips. Let's pause a moment and take the following test.

In 1979, the U.S. embassy in Iran was taken over by

- (a) Norwegians from Ballard
- (b) Elvis
- (c) A tour bus full of 80-year-old women
- (d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

In 1983, the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut was blown up by

- (a) A pizza delivery boy
- (b) Crazy feminists complaining that being able to throw a grenade beyond its own burst radius was an unfair and sexist requirement in basic training
- (c) Geraldo Rivera making up for a slow news day
- (d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

In 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 was bombed by

- (a) Luca Brazzi, for not being given a part in "Godfather 2"
- (b) The Tooth Fairy
- (c) Butch and Sundance who had a few sticks of dynamite left over from the train mission
- (d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

In 1998, the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by

- (a) Mr. Rogers
- (b) Hillary, to distract attention from Wild Bill's women problems
- (c) The World Wrestling Federation to promote its next villain: "Mustapha the Merciless"
- (d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

On 9/11/01, four airliners were hijacked and destroyed by

- (a) Bugs Bunny, Wiley E. Coyote, Daffy Duck, and Elmer Fudd
- (b) The Supreme Court of Florida trying to outdo their attempted hijacking of the 2000 Presidential election
- (c) The Swedish women's volleyball team
- (d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

See, ain't no patterns here.

the *gee-whiz!* page

By O.E. MacDougal

Chickens have been with us for roughly 4,000 years. They are descended from the wild red jungle fowl of India and Southeast Asia. The first chickens to reach the Americas were brought in the 1500s by Spanish explorers. But they were nothing like the kinds of chickens common today, which are veritable meat and egg factories.

Today's chicken is one of the cheapest food items you can buy, and 38 percent of all the meat eaten in the United States is chicken. But it wasn't always that way. Until after World War II, chicken was more expensive than either beef or pork. Having chicken for Sunday dinner was a sign of affluence. Hence, Herbert Hoover's campaign slogan during the Depression: "A chicken in every pot."

But all that changed in the 1940s when the poultry industry began selectively breeding them, producing birds that grow faster, lay more eggs, and produce more meat for less feed than ever before.

There are two main breeds of chickens prevalent in the United States today: **broilers**, sometimes called fryers, which are bred for meat production, and **laying hens**, bred primarily for eggs.

When today's broilers mature, they are larger than the laying hens, but they are lousy egg layers. A broiler goes to market at about 6½-weeks-old and weighs about 3½ pounds. But less than two pounds of feed has gone into each pound of chicken meat, whereas 70 years ago it took three times as much feed and twice as much time to get a pound of meat.

But broilers (or fryers) aren't the only chicken you'll find in the market. There are **roasters**, which are really

broilers that have been kept for about 10 weeks until they reach 6-8 pounds, and there are **capons**, which are neutered male broilers that have been fed for 10 weeks and weigh almost 10 pounds.

At the other end of the scale are Rock Cornish game hens, a cross between White Rocks and Cornish hens. They grow to market size—a mere 14 to 16 ounces—in just four weeks.

Unlike broilers, laying hens are raised strictly for eggs. A champion laying hen can lay more than 350 eggs in a year, and it's not unusual for an ordinary laying hen to lay 300. No bird in the wild, including the ancestors of today's chickens, lays even close to that many eggs. In fact, today's chickens lay twice as many eggs as chickens did in 1947.

One of the things that increases egg production is the amount of daylight hens receive. They need about 14 hours to lay efficiently. Production slows down, and sometimes even stops, if the amount of daylight falls below 12 hours. The egg companies take advantage of this by providing artificial lighting for the birds, thus maintaining full production the year-round.

But even chickens can't sustain this pace forever. As they age, they lay fewer eggs. To an egg rancher a laying hen's useful life is about two years, but ordinary folk often keep them for 10-12 years. They still produce, and they make interesting pets for some folks.

What happens to the commercially ranched old laying hens when they stop producing? These older chickens make the best soups and stocks, so soup companies like Campbells and Swansons buy most of them up. Δ

There is no language called "Chinese." But there are two primary languages spoken in modern China: Mandarin and Cantonese—as well as many minor dialects.

Having all of these languages would seem to pose a barrier to communication. For example, a speaker who speaks only Mandarin may not understand someone who speaks only Cantonese. And the problem just gets worse when you factor in all the dozens of other dialects.

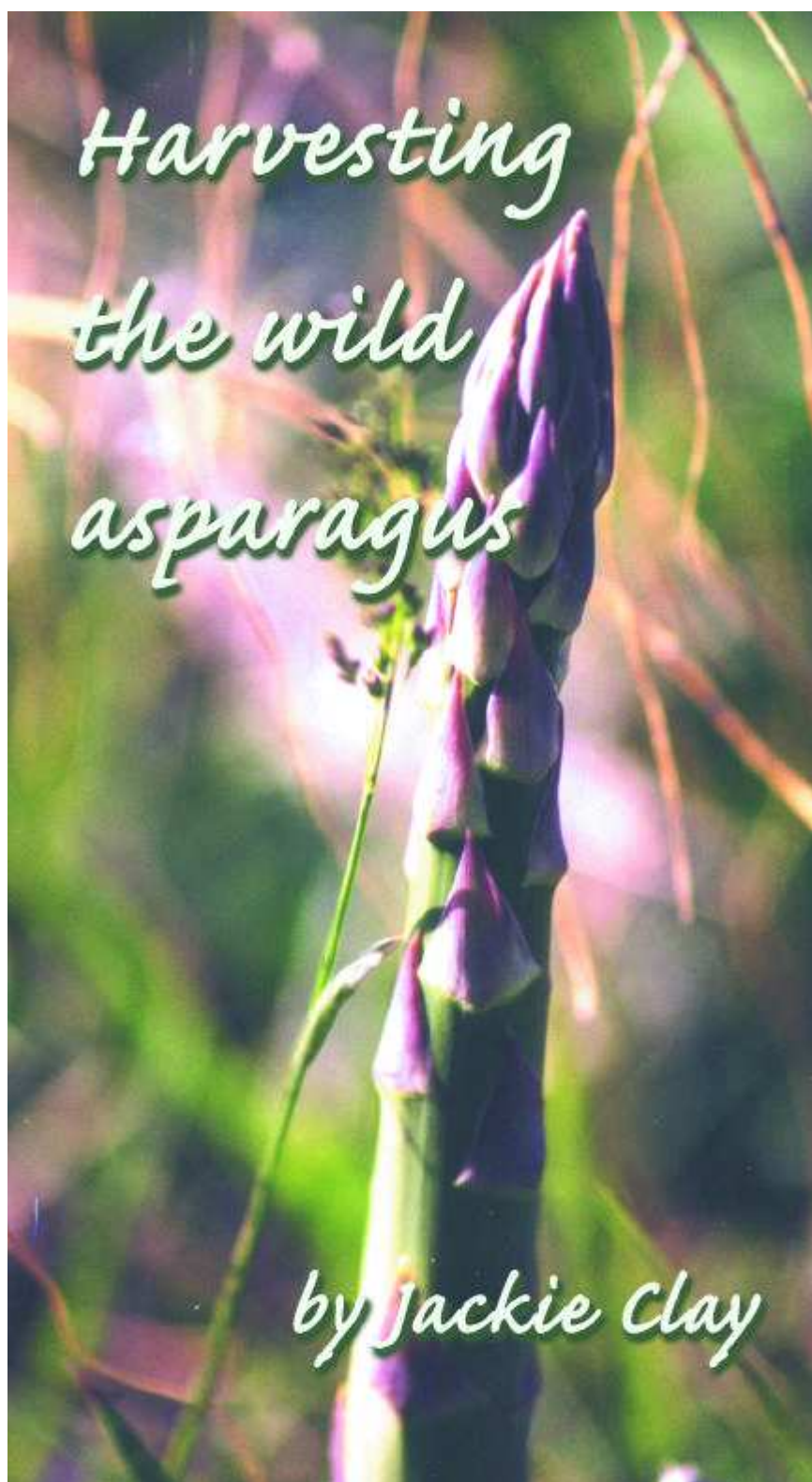
However, they all *read* the same "language." Not only that, but

Koreans and Japanese, who speak languages distinctly different from any in China, also use pretty much the same character set.

They can do this because, although their languages are different, the writing in all three cultures is not based on a phonetic alphabet like Western languages are. It is based on symbols, so a person can use the same set of symbols to write. Two people picking up a Chinese newspaper may both be able to read it, yet be unable to discuss it. Plus, they can each read the other's writing.

Over the centuries, Chinese characters have changed somewhat because of the different writing tools which have been adopted, so that if Confucius were to come back today he would find that there are no languages which he could understand. Yet, with marginal difficulty, he would still be able to read "Chinese," and he could respond in kind.

No "living" western language has this facility. For example, if King Arthur were to come back today, he could not understand English, either in its spoken or written form. Δ



*A near-perfect wild asparagus spear—
fat, short, tightly budded, and morning fresh*

Picking wild asparagus is often the first step a person takes toward learning to forage wild food. Although not technically a “wild” plant, more of an escapee from gardens via seeds and birds, asparagus grows very wild in most places across the U.S. and Canada. And, because fresh dew-covered wild asparagus is completely delectable, both raw and lightly cooked, it is well worth the hunt.

Finding wild asparagus

Wild asparagus is one plant that is easier to locate during the winter and early spring than it is mid-spring. Therefore, the best scouting for your asparagus is during these months. You’ll be looking for “bushes” of asparagus fern, often dotted with red “berries”—the seeds of the female plants. In the summer and fall, these asparagus bushes are bright green. Mature, heavily rooted asparagus bushes can grow waist high or higher, and are bigger around than a person can hug. They are light and airy, with delicate leaves.

In the winter, the plants turn a bright yellow, which fades to a yellowish tan with time. The color makes the bushes stand out among snow and stark grass and bare branches.

Most wild asparagus is found along roadsides, usually along fences or irrigation ditches (in the west). After all, seed is eaten by birds and birds perch on fences. We know what those birds do, besides perch, right? Instant fertilized asparagus seeds. Likewise, you’ll also often find asparagus growing on the south sides of trees and along brushy edges of farm fields. Those good old birds, again.

Irrigation ditches both distribute fallen seed and water the plants as they germinate and grow to maturity.

Another good bet is around abandoned old homestead and farm sites. Often old garden asparagus has spread to quite large patches by

means of dropped seeds and those birds again. Of course, always get permission to explore and pick asparagus on private property. The roadside is public domain in most areas.

Drive around quiet country lanes and roadsides slowly, watching for asparagus bushes. Take a notebook and a map of the area. Also bring a skein of red yarn. Your first asparagus plant may be a bit hard to discover, but once you see what you're looking for they're easy to spot. If in doubt, take an experienced gardener along on your first exploration trip. I also know of no poisonous plant that can be confused with asparagus.

Stop! There's a couple of plants over there by that old fence. Park your vehicle safely and take out your map, marking an "X" where you found your asparagus. Now take a piece of yarn a foot long or so and tie a nice bow in a conspicuous place near, but not on, the plant. If there are several plants nearby in the general vicinity, make note in your notebook, but don't tie more bows. You don't want to alert other asparagus hunters.



David Clay loves picking asparagus.

And there are a lot of folks who hunt asparagus in the spring.

Continue your exploration, making notes in your notebook, marking Xs on your map, and tying red yarn bows to help remind you where those plants are. Remember, during mid-spring when you'll return to pick your tender spears, the weeds, grass, and brush will be lush and partially hide your quarry.

Should you not begin to hunt asparagus until the spring, simply watch for green, mature asparagus plants. Then stop and cut the entire plant off below the surface of the ground and mark your location by yarn and in your notebook. I toss the plant off, as other hunters would be happy to cut your patch. No need in making it too easy by leaving the cut plant.

Cautions about picking wild asparagus

Be careful *not* to pick wild asparagus where there is a possibility of agricultural chemicals or county road weed killers having been sprayed on your future food. I don't pick asparagus close to heavily cropped areas, especially orchards (with plenty of spraying). Hayfields, pastures, and



A young asparagus plant shows off its fine leaves and airy appearance.

woods are generally safe neighbors to your wild asparagus bed.

I also stay clear of asparagus growing next to very busy highways or an expressway because of heavy fumes from traffic. While gasoline sold today is lead-free, lead stays in the soil for a long, long time, and I'd just as soon eat lead-free wild asparagus.

Picking asparagus

Asparagus begins to grow in early mid-spring. This time differs, depending on the growing zone and weather you live in. It's generally about right to begin hunting asparagus spears when the spring grass is beginning to grow well. You won't find asparagus coming up before the grass is growing, but if you wait too long, it'll be



Lightly steamed asparagus is cut into pieces to dehydrate.

harder to find because the rank grass will hide it until it is over-mature.

I carry a large basket and a small, sharp pocketknife. You want the most tender asparagus you can find. So don't pick in the heat of the day. I go out, first thing in the morning, often when the dew is still heavy on the grass. The asparagus spears you harvest then will be melt-in-your-mouth tender.

The ideal spear will be fat, the tip tightly closed and perhaps eight inches tall. The top will be purplish green and the lower portion will be white. These spears grow quickly—overnight, it seems. Unfortunately, the taller they grow, the tougher and more woody the spear gets. Taste store-bought asparagus to see what I mean. But even the longer spears can be harvested. Just cut the whole thing off at or below ground level, then snap the top off with your fingers where it will break. Throw the lower

part away, and keep the top; you have the most tender part of the long spear.

You can either cut the spears with a sharp knife, at or below ground level, or snap them off with your thumb and first finger, right at ground level.

Notice that we cut all asparagus off at ground level, even the tough, longer spears. This is to keep the plant producing. Some folks mistakenly let the long spears go and just harvest the tender spears poking up near-

by. Unfortunately this signals the plant to quit producing spears and production abruptly stops, leaving only the one tall fern to mature.

For this reason, you need to cut off all mature ferns from any plant group you want to harvest. If you come on a mature patch, simply cut all ferns off, toss 'em away and return in about a week. You'll find a nice bunch of tender spears poking out of the grass, just waiting for you.

If I'm seriously hunting wild asparagus to can or dehydrate for the pantry, along with a good batch to eat, of course, I take a cooler with a layer of ice on the bottom. Over the ice goes a folded bath towel to keep the asparagus off the ice, yet cool. In a good day of hunting, we can fill a large cooler.

I always "pay off" informants with a nice batch of my best asparagus. Some folks are too old to hunt

asparagus any more, but can point out a great patch. Others hunt it on occasion, but really don't want to bother. We greatly appreciate such tips and are generous with thanks and tender asparagus spears as well.

The best thing about asparagus (other than the taste) is that it is a cut-and-come-again plant. During the growing season, which extends over about a month, you can cut a batch and return in about four days to find as many or more spears rising up out of the grass to greet you.

Taming the wild asparagus

Not all wild plants take to being tamed, nor would you especially want them in your garden. We harvest bunches of lambs quarter and pig weed every year, but I certainly wouldn't advise anyone to plant them in their garden.

But asparagus is happy to be domesticated. Of course there are more productive varieties of hybrid asparagus, such as the nearly all-male Jersey King and Jersey Knight. They put all their energy into producing spears, instead of seeds, and the spears are large and fat. But sometimes cash is tight or you might actually want seeds to enlarge your asparagus plot. So consider the not-so-lowly wild asparagus.

I try to dig wild asparagus roots in the early spring, about the time the first shoots are being sent up. In this way, the plant has a good chance to recover from being divided and transplanted before winter comes.

One large, vigorous asparagus clump can provide you with a couple of dozen plants. The clump is formed of many individual plants, some quite large-rooted, some small. And they are all tangled with each other, making dividing them quite an interesting project.

Take a sharp spade and dig the entire clump up. First dig out away from the obvious spears, in a circle

about eighteen inches in diameter, down about two feet. Then, carefully pry under the plant, from all sides, working it loose. You will sweat and dig for half an hour if you dig carefully, so as not to injure the roots. Take sod and all. You'll end up with what appears to be a dehydrated octopus with many, many fat, long roots. At this point, I carefully work loose one entire plant and replant it in the hole and tenderly cover it up. I never take all of anything, leaving something to reproduce, to go to seed, or feed others.

If there is a body of water nearby, carry/drag the clump to the water and soak it well, working away grass roots and soil. When you finish, there will be just the tangled asparagus plants. Now sit down in the shade and gently work the plants apart. Each has a crown, possibly with a tiny spear shoot budded at its top. And each has several long, brown fatish roots dangling down, from six inches to two feet.

As you free a plant, lay it under a damp burlap sack, in the shade. When you finish, you will often have over a dozen nice, healthy plants—and no grass roots—to take home to your garden. Of course, you can repeat this process at different locations until you have as many free plants as you need. Remember, though, don't dig plants from someone else's land without permission. You sure wouldn't want someone digging plants up on your land.

As asparagus likes to be well fed, your new home for the wildlings should be well tilled, with a good bucket of rotted compost worked in where each plant will be set out. Dig a trench six inches deeper than the plant, allowing the roots to be spread out, but not bent and doubled up. Make a mound in the center and gently spread the roots out down its sides. Fill in the trench to the point that the crown is covered a bit. Then



Green Giant asparagus spears at \$2.99 v.s. foraged wild asparagus, home canned at 23¢—including lid and gas. Easy choice!

water well. Continue until all are happily planted.

As the spears grow, gradually fill in the trench until it is level with the soil around it. Then add a straw mulch over the row to hold back the weeds. Your wild asparagus is still spirited, but contentedly domesticated. And it will grow on, nearly forever, with very little special attention.

Home canning wild asparagus

Wild asparagus is very easy to home can. First, rinse and sort your asparagus. I choose the fattest, most tender spears to can as full spears, and the rest I cut into pieces.

Because asparagus is a low-acid food, as are all vegetables, it must be canned with a pressure canner. I recommend canning your asparagus the same day you pick it, as it doesn't take too long before it gets tough or limp, just like store asparagus. Simply put a big tea kettle of fresh water on, along with a pan to boil your jar lids in. Then, while the water is boiling, cut the spears into your jars. I cut off the tough lower end. With a sharp knife begin cutting off first the very bottom, then on up an

inch at a time, until your knife easily cuts the spear. The tougher ends may be simmered and put through a sieve for asparagus soup, canned at the same time you do your spears and/or pieces of asparagus.

I can both spears and inch-long pieces of asparagus. The spears I can in wide mouth jars, the pieces in regular jars, as the price of regular lids is much lower. But it's much easier to get full spears neatly out of a wide mouth jar.

The health benefits of asparagus

Since ancient times asparagus has been held to have special health properties.

Today we know it is not only a good source of folic acid and vitamin C, it also contains goodly amounts of disease-fighting antioxidant carotenoids that your body also uses to make vitamin A.

According to the National Cancer Institute, of all foods tested, asparagus contains the greatest amount of *glutathione*, one of the body's most potent cancer fighters.

It is also high in *rutin*, which is valuable for strengthening the blood vessels.

Pack the jars snugly to within an inch of the top of the jar. Then add half a teaspoonful of salt to pints and fill the jars to within an inch of the top with boiling water.

Wipe the rim of the jar clean, place a hot, previously boiled lid on, and screw the ring down firmly tight. Place the jars in a warm canner and process the jars at 10 pounds pressure (unless you live at an altitude above 1,000 feet; check canning manual for directions) for 30 minutes (pints) or 40 minutes (quarts).

Dehydrating asparagus

It is easy to successfully dehydrate asparagus at home. I dry quite a bit as it is so handy to use in mixed vegetables and soups.

I pick out the nicest spears I have and rinse them well. Cut them into one-inch pieces and blanch for about three minutes; do not overdo the cooking.

Place in a single layer on your dehydrator trays and dehydrate at 125 degrees until brittle. If my spears are very fat, over half an inch thick, I also cut the pieces in half so they dry quickly. This also makes them rehydrate much faster.

Store the dried asparagus in airtight containers in a cool, dark place. My bottom cupboard shelves hold my dehydrated foods successfully, and the jars are handy, too.

To rehydrate the asparagus, simmer until tender in twice as much water as asparagus. Or add the dry asparagus to your soup or stew a half an hour before serving.

Recipes for using all that delectable asparagus

One of our favorite recipes for wild asparagus is to carry a jar of ranch dressing with us, right into the fields, holding it on the ice with the asparagus. Then, as we finish, we sit down in the shade with a loaf of homemade French bread, butter, and cheese and dip the raw asparagus in the ranch

dressing. It doesn't get much better than that.

Another very easy and simple way to fix wild asparagus is to steam it in very little water until just nicely tender and serve hot with an herbed or lemon butter. This is the way I serve the whole asparagus spears and I don't get many complaints.

An old family favorite is creamed asparagus over hearty homemade toast. I like the toast to be either a good sourdough or honey whole wheat. Home baked, of course.

Simply simmer or steam the asparagus until tender; you can use fresh or dehydrated. (Or use a jar of your home canned asparagus.) Don't cook it too long or you'll have mush, not wonderful asparagus.

In a medium saucepan, add two tablespoons of butter, melted, and two tablespoons of white flour. Stir well. Then add either a cup and a half of low fat milk or cream, whichever your arteries will stand. Of course, cream is best, but not many of us can dare eat as we wish. Add a pinch of salt and black pepper to taste. Simmer while stirring to make a medium-thick white sauce. Add more milk, if necessary. Then drain and gently blend in cooked asparagus. Set aside in a warm place.

Slice your bread and toast it. Lay out on a plate. Spoon on creamed asparagus and enjoy.

Another of our favorites is asparagus au gratin. This is a cheesie baked dish, quick to put together, and always appreciated on the table.

Asparagus au gratin

2 lbs. tender wild asparagus spears
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, grated
2 Tbsp. butter
2 Tbsp. flour
1 tsp. salt
pinch black pepper
1 cup buttered cracker or dry bread bits
1 cup milk or cream

Butter a baking dish, put in whole asparagus spears or cut pieces in layers, sprinkling grated cheese between the layers.

In a small saucepan, melt the butter and stir in the flour. Cook a minute. Add the milk (or cream), salt, and pepper. Stir well until thickened to a medium white sauce. Pour this over asparagus. Cover with crumbs and grated cheese. Bake at 300 degrees until nicely browned.

Asparagus can also be used in salads, either as one ingredient in a mixed salad, raw, or lightly steamed and chilled and used in any of several salads. My personal favorite is:

Two beans and wild asparagus salad

½ cup cut wax beans
½ cup canned red kidney beans or other red bean
½ cup cut asparagus spears
4 Tbsp. vegetable oil
4 Tbsp. vinegar
2 Tbsp. sugar or honey

Cook the vegetables until tender. Drain well. Make your dressing by mixing the oil, vinegar, and sugar. You may also add a bit of French dressing if you wish. Toss the vegetables with the dressing and place, covered, in refrigerator to marinate well. Serve chilled.

Wild asparagus can be used any way you use peas in shepherd's pie, stews, soups, salads, pot pies, pasties, casseroles, or our favorite of favorites, raw, right from the wild patch. Seasoned with nothing but fresh, cold dew drops, this wild foraged vegetable can't be beat. Δ

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No dentist? OH, NO!

By Gary F. Arnet, D.D.S

Enjoying lunch while looking out over the gorgeous view from your backcountry home, you bite down hard on a nut, hear a loud crack, and immediately feel excruciating pain from a broken tooth. Rare? No, it occurs all the time.

Dental emergencies can occur at home or in the wilderness without warning and can incapacitate a person in an instant. "No problem, I'll get right over to the dentist," you think. Hopefully, that is possible, but not always. You may live some distance from a dentist, it may be a night or weekend when it is hard to find one, or there may not be any available.

One of the first things that stop during a disaster is dental care. Major natural disasters, such as earthquakes, fires, or floods, and human disasters, such as terrorism or riots, close dental offices in a second. Electrical shortages, as seen in California recently, or any disruption of the regional power grids and there is no help since dentists can't operate without electricity. Hospitals rarely have any dental services, so you could be on your own for hours or days.

Since dental first aid is rarely taught in first aid classes, information presented here is intended to help you in an emergency situation when no professional dental help is available. It is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care.

Prevention

Living in a rural area, avid hunter, fisherman, and dentist Dr. Kenneth Lund has much experience with dental emergencies. "Nothing can ruin a good hunting trip like a toothache," Dr. Lund says. "Anyone going on an extended trip, say over a week, should make sure they are current with their dental check-ups." This is



A toothache is the last thing you need when no dentist is available. Basic knowledge of dental first aid and a few things added to your first aid kit will help you until you can find professional help.

good advice for everyone, whether traveling or staying at home.

A routine visit to the dentist can prevent many painful dental problems. Professional cleanings help prevent gum infections. Fillings that are

starting to fail can be fixed before breaking at an inconvenient time. A small cavity in a tooth that causes no pain can be easily repaired before it does.

Proper care of teeth is important. Brush and floss teeth regularly to avoid cavities and gum infections. This is especially important during a time of crisis, such as a disaster or evacuation. While brushing is the last thing on your mind, gingivitis or gum infections are more frequent during times of emotional and physical stress, especially when coupled with poor oral hygiene.

A toothbrush with toothpaste is always the best way to clean your teeth. If one is not available or you find yourself in an emergency survival situation, clean your teeth in other ways. A wash cloth or towel can be used to remove the soft, sticky, bacteria-laden plaque that develops on the surface of the teeth. The end of a thin green twig from a non-poisonous tree or bush can be used. Chew it until it is soft and fibery and use this end as a brush to clean the teeth and gums. Even your finger will work if nothing else is available.

Dental first aid kit

The first time I needed to treat a broken tooth while backpacking, I opened my first aid kit and there was nothing that would help. I'll bet yours is the same. A few small, lightweight items available at a drug store or market can be added to your first aid kit to treat dental emergencies. I recommend the following:

- Dental floss
- Soft dental or orthodontic wax
- Cotton pellets
- Tempanol or Cavit temporary filling material
- Oil of cloves (eugenol)
- Small dental tweezers

When working in the mouth, remember to always wear protective gloves from your first aid kit to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Toothache

A toothache is caused by the inflammation of the nerve inside a tooth, called the dental pulp. Decay from a cavity that extends into the pulp can cause a toothache, as can a fracture of the tooth. If infection occurs in the tooth, it can cause excruciating pain and can spread through the root of the tooth into the jaw causing an abscess.

Symptoms of a toothache include pain in a certain tooth or over several teeth. At first, the pain may be mild, intermittent, and made worse with hot or cold foods or drink, cold air, and the pressure of biting. As it progresses, the pain may become constant, excruciating, and incapacitating.

Sometimes, an abscessed tooth will slowly drain infection into a large cavity. After a meal, when food is packed into the cavity, the drainage may be blocked and the pressure will increase in the tooth causing the toothache to become worse until the food is cleaned out.

Treatment of a toothache consists of locating the painful tooth and checking for any obvious cavity or fracture. Clean out any food with a toothbrush, toothpick, or similar tool. Then soak a small cotton pellet or, if not available, a small piece of cloth, in a topical anesthetic, such as a eugenol or benzocaine solution. This should then be placed in the cavity. A small pair of dental tweezers, like the type provided in commercial toothache kits, tick removing tweezers, or a small instrument like a toothpick is helpful in placing the cotton as it is often hard to get your fingers into the mouth. This topical anesthetic should give quick relief.

The type of topical anesthetic used is important. Dentists use pure eugenol for emergency treatment of toothaches since it is long-lasting, but this can be difficult to find. Oil of cloves is the same thing and is available without prescription at pharma-

cies and some health food stores. Be careful, however, as pure oil of cloves can cause chemical burns to the mouth and tongue if it gets off the tooth.

Commercial toothache medications that are available include *Red Cross Toothache Medicine* containing 85% eugenol, *Dent's Toothache Drops* containing benzocaine and eugenol, and *Orajel* containing benzocaine. Some products include the small dental tweezers and cotton pellets that you will need.

Once the medicated cotton is in place, cover it with a temporary filling material, such as *Tempanol* or *Cavit* to prevent it from falling out. These are all soft, putty-like materials that can be molded into the cavity. If they are not available, soft dental wax or softened wax from a candle can be used. If a candle is used, melt some wax and let it cool until it is pliable before placing in the mouth.

A pain medication, such as 800mg *Motrin* every 8 hours, or prescription pain medicines, such as *Vicodin*, 1-2 every four to six hours, can be used if

available. Do not place aspirin on the gum next to a painful tooth. Not only doesn't it help, it causes a large, painful burn to the gum tissue.

Seek help from a dentist immediately. If it takes some time to find one, it may be necessary to replace the cotton pellet with another freshly soaked in topical anesthetic.

Gingivitis

Gingivitis is an inflammation of the gums (gingiva) most commonly due to inadequate tooth brushing. Gums become red, swollen, and may bleed while brushing the teeth. It is largely preventable by good oral hygiene and regular dental check-ups. When gingivitis causes pain and bleeding in the field, improve oral hygiene by brushing three times per day, followed by warm salt-water rinses. Over-the-counter anti-bacterial mouthwashes may also help.

Dental abscess

An infected tooth or gum infection (gingival infection) can cause a dental abscess, also known as a pus pocket.



Dental items to add to your first aid kit: Cavit or Tempanol temporary filling material, eugenol or benzocaine-based toothache medicine, cotton pellets, small tweezers, small tool for placing filling material, soft dental wax, and dental floss.



Over-the-counter toothache medicines will help ease the pain from a toothache or broken tooth. Many are available, including those containing eugenol (oil of cloves), such as Red Cross Toothache Medicine, benzocaine, such as Orajel, and those containing both, such as Dent's Toothache Drops.

Food lodged between the teeth can also do so if not removed with dental floss.

Abscesses are normally located next to the offending tooth and cause pain and swelling. They can spread beyond the tooth to the face, floor of the mouth, or neck and it may be difficult to open the mouth or swallow. On rare occasions, dental abscesses can become life-threatening by getting so large that they block breathing or by causing fever or generalized infection throughout the body. Deal with any abscess immediately.

Antibiotics are required to treat abscesses. Go to a dentist immediately. If one is not available or if there is severe swelling go to a physician or hospital emergency room. When dental or medical help is not available and the situation is an emergency, oral antibiotics, such as penicillin 500 mg every six hours, can be given, after making sure the person is not allergic to the medication.

Warm salt-water rinses of the mouth every four hours may help the abscess to spontaneously drain, giv-

ing some relief of the pain. Do not place hot packs to the outside of the face unless directed to by your dentist or physician, as heat can spread the infection outward. Pain medications may be used as described above.

In the rare situation where no professional help is expected to be available for some time and no antibiotics are available, an abscess that is localized next to a tooth can be drained to remove the pus. A sterile scalpel, needle, or a fishhook (with the barb removed and disinfected by heating with a match) may be used to puncture the abscess. It will be painful to do, but there should be immediate relief from the abscess.

Broken filling or lost crown

Biting down on candy, nuts, ice cubes, and other hard or sticky foods are common ways to break a tooth or filling. If the tooth is not painful, be careful not to break it further during eating and see a dentist as soon as possible.

A temporary filling can be placed to prevent the tooth from becoming sensitive to hot or cold and to avoid food from packing into the hole left by the filling. Place a small amount of a temporary filling material, such as *Tempanol* or *Cavit*, into the hole in the tooth using a dental instrument or a flat tool such as the blade of a knife, popsicle stick, or similar tools. Have the person bite down on the temporary material to form it to their bite and then have them open their mouth and remove any excess material. These materials will harden some and remain in place. Soft wax also can be used in the same manner as filling a cavity described above.

Crowns (caps) can be pulled off teeth by sticky foods, such as caramel and salt-water taffy. If the tooth is not sensitive to hot or cold, save the crown and see a dentist as soon as convenient.

If the tooth is so sensitive that it prevents the person from eating, it may be necessary to replace it temporarily. Do this only if really necessary, as this is only a temporary solution and there is a risk that the crown could come off and be swallowed. Clean out any dry cement or material from the inside of the crown with a dental instrument or knife. Place a thin layer of temporary filling material, denture adhesive, or even a thick mixture of water and flour inside the crown. Making sure the crown is aligned properly on the tooth, have the person gently bite down to seat the crown all the way and see a dentist as soon as possible.

Injuries to teeth

A fall or blow to the mouth can injure teeth, most commonly the upper front teeth. Teeth may be in a normal position, but loose when touched, may be partially out of the socket or pushed back, or may be completely knocked out. Unless it is completely knocked out, the first thing you should do is see a dentist.

When one is not available within a reasonable time, a tooth that is out of place may be repositioned with steady, gentle pressure to bring it back into proper position. If it is very loose, gently biting on a piece of gauze can help hold it in place. A dentist should be seen as soon as possible, as the tooth may need to be splinted to hold it in place until healing occurs.

When a tooth is completely knocked out (avulsed), what you do in the first 30 minutes determines whether the tooth can be saved. The ligaments that hold a tooth into the jaw are torn along with the nerve and blood vessels when it is knocked out of its socket and it is essentially a "dead tooth." When re-implanted into the tooth socket within 30 minutes the body will usually accept it and the ligaments will reattach. While it will require a root canal to remove the dead nerve and blood vessels, it will be a functioning tooth.

Over 30 minutes before it is re-implanted and the body treats it like foreign material and slowly dissolves the root over a period of weeks to months. Often the tooth needs to be extracted.

To treat an avulsed tooth, find the tooth on the ground or in the person's mouth. If the socket is bleeding, have the person bite down on gauze pads placed over the top of the socket. A moistened non-herbal tea bag may also be used.

Check the tooth to make sure it is whole and not broken. Handling the tooth only by the crown, the part that normally shows in the mouth, clean off any dirt or debris by gently rinsing the tooth with sterile saline, disinfected water, or milk. It is important that you do not touch the thin, whitish colored layer of soft tissue covering the root. This is the important layer of periodontal ligament that will allow the tooth to reattach. Replace the tooth into the tooth socket and with

gentle, steady pressure push it into place. Have the person bite down lightly on a piece of gauze to hold it in place and see a dentist immediately to have the tooth stabilized.

If a tooth cannot be immediately re-implanted, it should be wrapped in gauze and soaked in a container of sterile saline solution, milk, or the injured person's saliva while they are immediately taken to a dentist. Some recommend keeping the tooth moist by placing it in the victim's mouth. This does work, but the tooth can also accidentally be swallowed.

Dental emergencies are more common than most people realize. While you most often will be able to obtain help from a dentist, there are times when you may be on your own. Prevention, knowledge, and a few important items in a dental first aid kit can save you and your family during these times. Δ



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Ask Jackie

Hazelnut trees, canning garlic, sourdough question, planting wheat, using rain water, and more

My husband and I are starting our second year on five acres in the Puget Sound area. Most of the first year has been spent remodeling the farmhouse we bought. Soon, however, we will need to address "stuff" outdoors, like our grove of hazelnut trees. I'm not even sure how many there are; at least six, but not more than eight. We were told, and last year confirmed, that the trees produce shells but no nuts. This we're told is the result of having no "male" trees to pollinate the female trees. Is this true? And if so, can the trees be hand pollinated? We have what may be a male tree quite a ways from the grove behind the barn.

Also, these trees are very, very overgrown. Is there anything we should know about pruning them or can we just cut them back as we would a regular tree?

Lori Moltz
lmoltz@hotmail.com

Hazelnuts are a great addition to any homestead. They bear abundantly and are so tasty. As to why your trees don't bear nuts, I'm not sure if your hazelnuts are a wild strain or domestic. My guess is that they are a domestic variety, gone wild. Hazelnuts produce both male and female flowers on the same tree. The male flowers are the tiny, greenish ones above the clusters of creamy flowers further out on the branches. Wild hazelnuts are largely self-pollinating, while domestic (usually grafted) varieties require a pollinator, best if of a different variety, to bear well.

If your grove were mine, I'd thin out the dead branches and jungle

growth to allow the trees to put more energy into fruiting. Then, in the spring, I'd plant two domestic hazelnuts, of different varieties, in the general vicinity of your nut grove. This combination should get you into nut production in the next year or two. (Sooner if the trees just need pruning and cleaning out.)

Jackie

You give a sourdough starter recipe in Issue #72. Questions: You say that to use the starter one should leave it out for 18 hours. Are you saying to leave out the entire container of starter for 18 hours or to leave out just the amount needed for a recipe? And to replenish the starter you say to replace the amount removed with equal amounts of flour and water. Does this mean that if I remove 1 cup of starter I should replace it with ½ cup flour and ½ cup water?

Mike Key
Clearwater, FL

Sorry to have confused readers. When you refrigerate your starter, set it out overnight or 18 hours to warm it up before using. Then give it a stir and dip out the amount of starter you need. Let's say our recipe calls for 2 cups of starter. After your recipe is mixed up, add one cup warm water and 1 cup of flour to your starter, stirring in well. Cover and place back in the fridge. Don't store your starter in a metal bowl; a crock or jar is much better. The reaction to aluminum or tin can damage the yeast in the starter.

You don't have to store your starter in the fridge, but it is better to do so



Jackie Clay

when your home is quite warm, especially in the summer. If left on the counter or in the pantry, it should be used at least weekly to keep in good condition.

You'll have to remember that old-time sourdough bakers used their starter nearly every day, and often more than that. Breakfast might consist of sourdough pancakes, bread for lunch and a sourdough cake for dessert at suppertime. Thus the starter was often stirred and "fed" several times daily, keeping it very actively growing.

Jackie

I've been looking for a canning recipe for garlic; I want to can it plain. How can it be done?

Virginia
virginia39@earthlink.net

You can home can garlic, although it really is better either kept fresh, raw, in a cool, dry, dark place or dehydrated. I usually slice peeled whole cloves of garlic in half, then dehydrate until brittle. A quick whirl in the blender or hand food chopper turns this dry garlic into granulated dehydrated garlic. It is very good, easy to store and use.

However, if you really want to can it, you can do this by peeling the cloves and either chopping them—to

make minced garlic—or using whole cloves. Simmer the garlic in barely enough water to cover it for 5 minutes. Then pack hot into hot jars to within ½ inch of the top of jar. Add liquid in which garlic was boiled to within ½ inch of the top of jar. Add ½ teaspoon of salt. Wipe the rim clean, place a hot, previously boiled lid on the jar and screw down the ring firmly-tight. Process pints for 40 minutes in a pressure canner, at 10 pounds pressure, adjusting the pressure to your altitude if necessary. (See your canning manual for adjusting to your altitude.)

Jackie

Jackie, can you tell me how to plant wheat? I'm trying to figure out how to water it once it's in the ground. Do I cultivate the seeds into the soil, and if so how deep?

Jim Lowry, Simi Valley, CA

Wheat is among the easiest of crops to plant. We work up our wheat patch with our Troy-Bilt 8-horse tiller, first gradually down to a depth of eight inches, working in good composted horse manure. Then I make one pass across the garden in the opposite direction with the tiller set at only two inches or so, smoothing the soil. Our wheat patch is roughly 20 by 50 feet, and I usually simply walk across it and hand broadcast the wheat. Now I've been doing that for dozens of years; it does take some practice to get the hang of hand broadcasting. One begins with heavy bands of grain, then bare spots until you get the hang of it. You might use a plastic hand-crank lawn seeder. Our son, David, sowed in a good patch of wheat down in New Mexico when he was eight, using one of these. They are available at any large lawn and garden supply store for around \$9 or less.

Whether you hand broadcast or use a crank broadcaster, try to get the seed to lie about two inches apart, all

ways, as the wheat plant takes about that much room, as it grows. Planted too close together, it is stunted.

Once the wheat is lying on the soil, we set the tiller to just barely till the soil; about two inches. Then again going in the opposite direction of the last tilling, we gently till in the wheat. You will see some seed still on the surface; that is normal.

You can get the same results by raking in the seed. Rake back and forth across the last tilling, covering the seed as you do.

We use above-ground, whirly bird-type impulse sprinklers, set in pieces of six foot one-inch or so discarded pipe, driven in the ground down the center of the wheat patch. Our spring runs enough pressure via gravity to really spray far. Thus only two pieces of pipe need to be driven in the center, in two places, on the whole patch, in order that all the wheat receives even watering.

It does not harm the seed at all to walk about on it. It actually presses it into the soil well. So don't worry about walking on it as you set your sprinklers. We have lots of hose, so we usually just leave two lengths, hooked to older sprinklers on their pipes, joined with an 99-cent "Y" for the whole season.

Jackie

I'm planning a square foot garden beside my house. Will rain water from the shingled roof hurt the vegetables or my family? I have no gutters on the house. If I use untreated lumber to build my frames, that are five to six inches from my house, will they attract termites to them and to my house?

**Kim Howe
Toms River, NJ**

No, the rain water will not hurt the vegetables, or your family. In fact a lot of people install gutters and rain barrels at all corners, to catch and use the rain water for their gardens. The

only problem you might have without gutters, is that the drip line may try to erode the soil in your bed. When you build your raised bed, first determine where the runoff falls. You can tell this by the washed line that runs parallel to your house. Here the rain falls very hard. Perhaps the easiest (and cheapest) way to avoid having your plants washed away by this torrent is to lay some washed stone or other heavy mulch in the bed where this water will fall, breaking its force. Don't place your raised bed beyond the drip line, as that will trap the water, letting it flow under and around your home's edges. If termites are found in your area, this could cause other problems, besides decay of the wood. The little buggers love damp wood of a home.

I think I would, for the same reason, use concrete blocks along the home side of the raised bed. I absolutely hate using treated timbers in a vegetable bed. Those green timbers leach toxic chemicals into the soil—and your family's food is growing in that soil. Can't find any used blocks, or can't afford new blocks? (Ask for seconds—blocks unacceptable by builders because of cracks or missing corners.) Used railroad ties make a good second choice.

Jackie

I recently canned some chicken noodle soup. When the time was up on the canning time, I let the canner cool, took the gauge off and then took off the lid. The water was out of the jars, or at least half of it was gone. What is the problem? Is it still good to eat?

**Kathy
kmkfln@optidynamic.com**

There are several things that exhaust the fluid from canned goods during processing. The one that usually gets me is getting distracted and letting the pressure get too high, then lowering it to get back on track. A

sudden lowering of pressure (as when someone “helps” the pressure canner get down to zero by bumping the pet-cock or weight) also is a common cause of this.

Because you were canning chicken noodle soup, I’d also be a bit suspicious of the noodles expanding a bit, causing the jars to be too full of food. Jars that are too full of food or filled too high with liquid often cause fluid loss, such as yours.

The food is still good to eat, as long as the seals remain good; that is indented firmly in the center, with no give, whatsoever.

This is a once-in-awhile problem that most home canners run into, sooner or later. Don’t let it discourage you, but can on.

Jackie

I read Backwoods magazine every month and save it for future reference. I like Jackie Clay’s articles on gardening. In the March/April issue I read her piece on butchering game and noticed a few things I don’t agree with. I live in Colorado and have hunted all my life and guided elk hunters for 10 years. So I’ve cut, packed, & gutted a lot of game.

First, hosing off game meat is not a good idea. There is bacteria in water that will speed up the spoiling process. Meat should be left dry hanging for a week or two at 34°-38° if possible, then after cutting steaks out you trim off the dry exterior part of the meat. If cutting meat up right after you shoot it, I guess hosing is ok, but a dry brush removes hair better. I have let elk hang in the shade for a week when temperatures reach no more than 50 or 60 during the day. After the meat temperature drops over night, as it usually does, it will age just fine even though the daytime temperatures are warm in the sun.

Second, why cut bone, and pack out that extra weight? It takes only a few minutes longer to bone the meat on the spot. I cut up the back of the ani-

mal and lay the hide out to the side and use as a table to keep meat clean. Simply remove the backstrap on one side, then cut off the front shoulder and bone it. Then bone the hind quarter right where it is. Just follow the bone with the tip of your knife, then go around the bone and take off the meat in one or two pieces. This way you don’t even have to gut the animal. Then flip the carcass over and repeat. This way you can pack out a whole elk on one horse or mule.

No hide, bones, etc. to add weight. This past season I downed a nice big 5x5 bull and was able to pack it out with the help of two friends all in one trip on our backs up a steep canyon, two miles to the truck. Just thought you’d like to know. Please excuse my writing. I’m at camp.

Mark Stuart, Austin, CO

You know, Mark, hunting and butchering wild game is like everything else; everyone has his or her own way. I disagree that there is bacteria in water that will speed up spoiling. My former husband was a veterinarian, with a degree in bacteriology, having worked in meat and poultry processing plants. He agreed with me that getting a carcass hosed off with cold water was essential to good keeping, as blood is one of the best mediums in which to grow bacteria.

Add a little rumen contents or spilled manure and you’ve got plenty of bacteria running around inside the carcass.

I hose a carcass off quickly, getting as much blood and loose matter off. If there’s no water available, I use fresh snow. I would not use lake or stream water; that’d be asking for trouble. The hosing cleans the carcass and rapidly cools it.

I won’t hang a carcass outside during 50° or 60° days; you and a lot of others do. I wouldn’t buy a beef roast and lay it on the picnic table, in the shade, when it was 60°, and can’t see the difference. But maybe I’m wrong; I am pretty darned fussy about my meat.

Why cut bone and pack out that extra weight? Because the yield of edible meat from a carcass that I bring home, bone intact, is much greater than that field boned, in the

woods. I cut every tiny bit of useable meat from the bones, inside and out. You just can't do that in field conditions. It takes too long. If you don't gut the animal, how do you get the tenderloins, which lay inside the ribcage, beneath and on either side of the spine? I think these are the choicest cuts on any meat animal.

Then there is the liver and heart, although many people do not like them. I also use the hide....or at least give it to someone who does. I hate to waste something that valuable.

Another argument for not taking the time to bone out an animal on the spot is that we hunt in grizzly country. Unfortunately, these huge carnivores have learned that rifle shots in elk season means a gut pile dinner. A hunter fifty miles away was killed by a sow bear as he field dressed his elk. I like to do basic field dressing and pack out....quickly. I've never had bear trouble, and don't want to tempt fate.

But, like I said, everyone has his or her own ways about everything, from butchering to planting tulips. Glad you got a nice bull. Good eating!!

Jackie

You discuss canning cabbage. I am new to canning and wonder how long I would need to process the cabbage in a canner that doesn't offer pounds of pressure settings. I just have the big old WalMart blue speckled pot and lid with the metal jar holder inside.

Judi Callahan
acromet@netzero.net

EEEEK!!! Whoa! Stop! Don't even think about canning cabbage in your blue speckled canner. That's a boiling water bath canner. It's great for high acid foods, such as fruits, pickles, jams, jellies and preserves. But low acid foods, such as vegetables and meats, **must** be canned in a pressure canner; the one with a gauge or weight indicating pressure in the can-

ner during processing. The pressure canner also has a lock-down lid, needed for the intense steam pressure necessary to kill harmful bacteria, possibly present in low acid foods.

I know some old-timers still can vegetables and even meat with a water bath canner, using extremely long processing times. But this is not safe. It only takes one bad jar of one food to make your family seriously ill from food poisoning. I look at it like playing Russian roulette; most of the time it's safe...it's the loaded chamber that kills you.

Pick up a good pressure canner. They're not that expensive, and they're usually a once-in-a-lifetime purchase that pays for themselves hundreds of times over. There are not many things you buy today that you can say that about, are there?

And once you've bought your canner, here's how I can cabbage:

Wash well, removing any damaged, loose or wilted leaves. Cut into desired size pieces or shred, as for sauerkraut. Boil for five minutes. Pack into jars, to within 1 inch of the top. Add ½ teaspoon of salt to each pint, 1 teaspoon to each quart. Fill to within 1 inch of the top of the jar with boiling cabbage broth. Wipe the rim of jar clean, place a hot, previously boiled lid on the jar and screw down the ring firmly-tight. Process pints 50 minutes and quarts 60 minutes at 10 pounds pressure. (Adjust the pressure to altitude requirements, if necessary. See your canning manual.)

Now I've told you that you cannot can cabbage in a water bath canner, there *are* exceptions. How? By making cabbage an acid food, instead of a low acid food, by using vinegar as the acid. Many relishes use cabbage as an ingredient and there is sauerkraut. These, because they are now high-acid, due to the vinegar, may be safely canned with your blue speckled water bath canner. Be sure to use a recipe in a canning book or manual to

be safe. But I know you meant home canned cabbage, as a vegetable, so we talked about that first.

Jackie

Do you compost your kitchen scraps along with your livestock manure? If so, how do you keep the bears and critters from messing with it? I would think rotting food would be very attractive to wildlife, and the last thing we want to do is have them learn that people = food.

Charlotte
Bakersfield, CA

No, I don't compost my kitchen scraps. They are recycled through our chickens and other poultry. After passing through them, the wildlife has absolutely no interest in them! I totally agree with you that one does not want to attract animals, especially bears, to the compost pile. We used to even take in our hummingbird feeders to keep plentiful bears on our last remote mountain homestead from drinking the "juice" like Koolaid!

Bones are burned in a hot fire, in my kitchen range. I don't want even our dogs to have access to them, as a lot of pets die every year because of bone splinters in their digestive tract.

When one does not have chickens, you can bury crushed egg shells and vegetable/fruit wastes in the compost pile. I haven't known anyone to have trouble this way. You should not just toss them on the top of the pile. The compost pile should be enclosed in a fence of some type; barrel, pallets or wire, if wildlife might be a problem in your area.

Jackie

Can you tell me what we can do to keep our deer hamburger from getting rancid in the freezer?

Teresa Steadman
dtsteadman@valint.net

The most common reason most folks' venison burger goes yucky in

the freezer is that they grind pork fat with the lean venison. Pork does not have as long a freezer life as does beef or venison, and thus the burger will freezer burn or go rancid in from six months to a year. I much prefer using beef fat with our venison burger, whether the venison is elk, moose or deer. I don't freeze much meat any more; I much prefer to can it, as then I know every bit will keep. Even venison mixed with beef fat will seldom taste good over a year in the freezer. The same goes with straight beef.

So the first tip is to eat that venison burger up quicker or else home can at least half of it as spaghetti sauce, seasoned taco meat, meat balls, etc. Good venison is wonderful tasting. Don't ruin it by keeping it too long.

Next, to keep meat good for a few months in the freezer, be sure you wrap it well in a good quality freezer wrap. If you have it done at a meat processing plant, I'm sure they do it right. But I've seen some folks simply wrapping their meat in plain cellophane or plastic zip lock lunch bags. These do not offer enough protection for the meat. Air seeps in and the meat begins to taste "funny"...then "disgusting."

Another thought is that the meat may hang too long in a tree during hunting season, letting the fat begin to go rancid. The grinding and freezing will not cover up that taste. During days warmer than 40°, that meat must be refrigerated or kept on ice.

Jackie

For the past several years we have been seriously considering moving to the woods and have been following your articles closely, regarding what it is like to do so. Do you use the government homesteading program or do you buy your land from a private party? We have been reading a lot about the government land home-

steading program and wonder how reliable and good the program is?

Jackie and Murray Vance
mrpoohbear@qwest.net

Oh, that there actually was a viable government homesteading program yet. If anyone can show me (and other readers) that there **is** a legitimate homesteading program anywhere in the U.S., **please let us know**. Unfortunately, there are a lot of scams out there, purporting to help folks acquire no-cost homestead land. All you have to do is buy their information.

The closest thing to a homestead program exists in Alaska, for residents only. And even there, the land is not free for the taking.

No, we, like everyone else, must struggle long and hard to buy our homestead land from private owners. It's especially hard for us, who simply *need* the wilderness to live. Most folks' needs are not so specific—or hard to find. There really isn't much privately owned wilderness land out there. And that, which is for sale is often in large blocks and very expensive for us poor, but honest folk.

But self-reliant folks specialize in dogged determination, bordering on the insane. And sooner or later that dream homestead land *can* be found and a bargain can be struck that will work for all parties. Good luck with your move. Backwoods living truly is the great life.

Jackie

We have just harvested our potatoes and we were hoping to find a way to store them for winter use. Our basement is too warm to use and the garage gets too cold. Have you ever heard of putting them in sand to keep them or is there some other way to do it?

Josie Boone
jvoone@bright.net

I would really not recommend putting potatoes in sand to keep them good. This works well for carrots and parsnips, but not so well for potatoes, which are much more susceptible to chilling and freezing than are other root crops. Even a bad chilling will cause potatoes to develop black spots, which quickly turn to rot.

A nifty potato storage in a warm basement is building a small insulated room that vents to the outside, in an unused corner of the basement. If you don't want to go to that much trouble and expense (or if your home is rented), you can store your potatoes in baskets, set inside of a large cardboard carton, set inside of a larger one. With insulating material, such as leaves or straw between boxes, your taters should stay cool in a north corner of your heated basement. Keep them dry and check them from time to time; sometimes potatoes have been slightly injured during digging and will later develop rot. And like apples, one rotten potato ruins a whole bunch.

You can also try dehydrating and home canning some of the potatoes. I do this every year, to lessen the chances of some of my potatoes going bad. I can't stand that.

Home dehydrating potatoes is very easy. Simply peel them, slice them ½ inch thick, boil for three minutes, and rinse well. Pat dry and arrange in single layers on a dehydrator tray. An electric dehydrator works very well, but you can use cookie sheets in an oven with only the pilot light on. (Sorry if you only have an electric stove.) Dehydrate them until they are hard and crisp. They'll store forever in an airtight jar. To rehydrate, simply simmer with boiling water. Just like those potatoes au gratin in a plastic bag, only better tasting and more nutritious.

Jackie

The self-sufficient barnyard

By Rich Kientopf

In their quest for self-sufficiency, a lot of families start out quite logically by moving to their own piece of land in the country and cultivating a large garden. Once they feel they have mastered this step, they **b e g i n** thinking



about livestock. This is where many people fail. They either underestimate the cost of owning various livestock, or they willy-nilly acquire a collection of poultry and animals that resembles a petting zoo more than a farmyard. In this article I'll try to run down the basics.

Land base

Make sure you have enough land to feed the livestock you plan to keep. Here in the Midwest, a family of three or four needs at least five acres of tillable land to be self-sufficient on food. I mean good land where an acre will produce 100 bushels of corn or pasture one cow for an entire summer. If your land won't produce this well, you need more. Talk to local farmers and ranchers to get a feel for this.

Of course you can buy all of your feed from the local feed store in colorful 50-pound bags. However, if you do this, you're merely transferring

your dependency from the grocery store to the feed store and probably haven't saved any money on your food bill. Even the best run farm relies on some purchased feed in the form of mineral and protein supplements, but the idea is to keep this to a minimum. Also bear in mind that crop failures due to drought, insects, and the like can happen, so it's a good idea to have at least a six-month supply of reserve feed on hand. Never have an empty corn crib, granary, or hay mow.

What to raise?

First and foremost, raise only what you want to eat. Twenty years ago, when we bought our first cow, a neighbor tried to convince us that it was more economical to keep a few goats. Maybe so, but my family preferred to drink cow's milk and eat beef rather than subsist on goat products. If you're going to invest the money and do the work, make sure you're going to enjoy the results.

Poultry

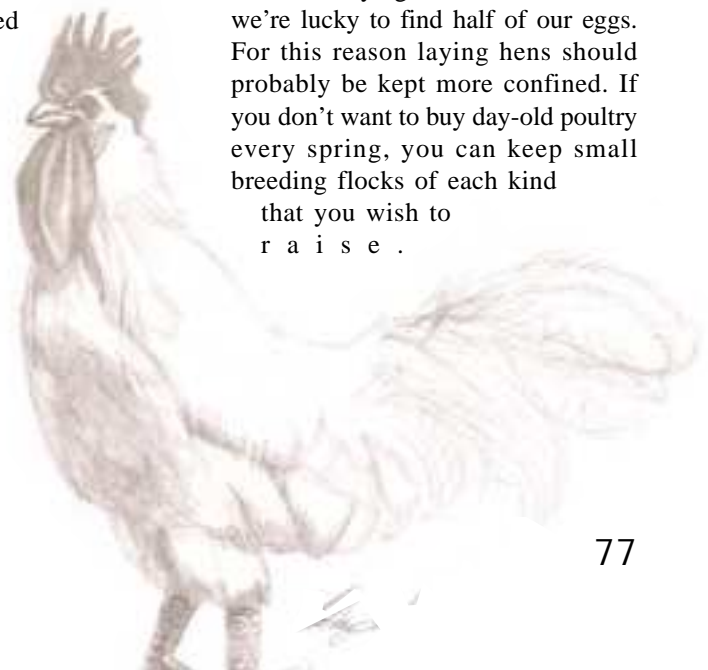
The cheapest and easiest way to get started is with a flock of chickens. Free range chickens require little extra feed during the summer months as they will eat a multitude of insects, weed seeds, spilled and wasted grain, etc. On our farm, broilers are purchased every spring and started in the brooder house. When they are about two weeks old, we give them access to a small outside enclosure, and by

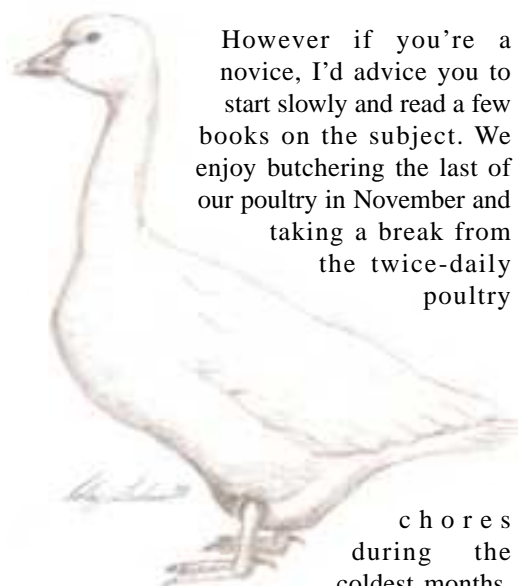
the time they are a month old they have the run of the farm. Currently we don't offer them any protein supplements or any purchased food once we turn them loose, giving them only cracked corn outside the brooder house each morning. We've found that providing the corn and water near the brooder house keeps them from wandering too far. We also found that if we keep a 60-watt bulb lit in the brooder house near dusk, the chickens will automatically go inside by the time it gets dark, and all we have to do is shut the door to keep them safe from varmints.

We always buy Cornish rock broilers; these are the same kind that the poultry industry raises to market in six weeks or less. However the way we raise them they grow slower, cost less to raise, and taste better. We can usually begin butchering fryers weighing four to five pounds dressed at about three months of age, and we let some of them go until they are five to six months old for an excellent eight to ten-pound roasting chicken.

One word of caution: While this method of raising poultry has worked well for us with our meat chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, we have found that free-range laying hens soon start laying all over the farm and we're lucky to find half of our eggs. For this reason laying hens should probably be kept more confined. If you don't want to buy day-old poultry every spring, you can keep small breeding flocks of each kind

that you wish to
r a i s e .





However if you're a novice, I'd advice you to start slowly and read a few books on the subject. We enjoy butchering the last of our poultry in November and taking a break from the twice-daily poultry

chores during the coldest months.

That way we also avoid the hassle of keeping watering troughs thawed out during subzero weather.

Milk cow

The most valuable addition to homestead self-sufficiency, especially if you have children, is a milk cow. When choosing a cow, I would select one of the smaller dairy breeds, Guernsey or Jersey, over the larger Holstein, which consumes too much feed and gives too much milk for homestead use.

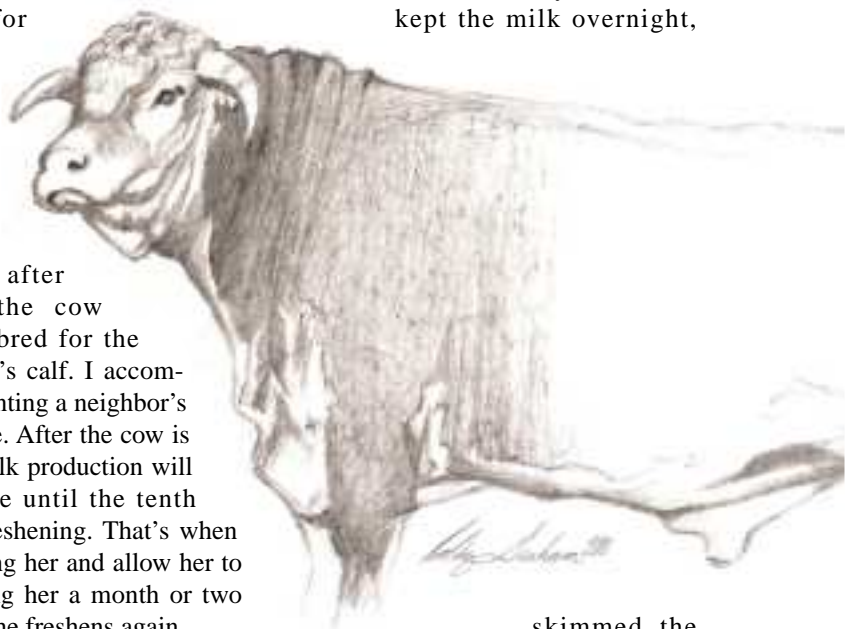
For those of you who are unfamiliar with the annual cycle of a milk cow, it goes as follows: 1st month, the cow "freshens" which means she has given birth to her calf and started giv-

ing milk. You will begin milking the cow twice a day. (The first six milkings are colostrum. This milk is essential for the health of the newborn calf, but should not be used for human consumption. On the seventh milking you may start using the milk. Sixty to ninety days after freshening, the cow should be re-bred for the following year's calf. I accomplish this by renting a neighbor's bull for a while. After the cow is re-bred, her milk production will slowly decline until the tenth month after freshening. That's when you quit milking her and allow her to "go dry," giving her a month or two to rest before she freshens again.

If you want an uninterrupted supply of milk, you'll need two cows with staggered freshening dates. The size of your farm and feed supply will determine whether you want to keep a second cow.

Our first family cow was a Guernsey. We always bred her to a beef bull and the resulting calf was fattened into an excellent beef animal that could be butchered at 18 months of age and yielded a 650-pound carcass. When our cow first freshened,

she gave about six gallons of milk a day (3 gallons per milking). We took a gallon for household use and a gallon to feed the calf. The excess milk was used in various ways. We often kept the milk overnight,



skimmed the cream, and made butter.

The extra butter could then be frozen and kept to use during our cow's dry period. The resulting skim milk is an excellent feed supplement for either pigs or chickens. Sometimes we would buy an extra baby calf to feed the excess milk to. By the time a calf is several weeks old it can safely consume several gallons of milk a day, although one gallon is sufficient if you offer grain and hay too. Another way to use excess milk would be to try home cheese making. Good cheese can be stored indefinitely and the resulting whey is also good pig or chicken feed.

Pigs

At our house we eat a lot of pork, so it was only natural to raise a few pigs. For the homestead it's best to purchase feeder pigs weighing 30 to 50 pounds and to fatten them to 250 to 300 pounds for slaughter. I'd say buy feeder pigs because keeping one sow takes about 50 bushels of corn a year and should produce two litters of

at least eight pigs per year. Also, the cost of owning a boar to breed one or two sows is prohibitive, and few people will be willing to rent or lend you one. If you live in an area with large hog farms, you can often pick up a few pigs cheap, if they happen to have a late litter that doesn't fit with the rest of a large group. In addition to corn, oats, and barley, which we raise, our hogs receive a purchased protein supplement. We also feed kitchen waste (potato peels, spoiled fruit, etc.) garden refuse, and surplus dairy products.

Horses

We've always had quarter horses for pleasure riding, but I have to admit that they contribute nothing to our bottom line. They would, however, be an effective replacement for both car and tractor in the event of a disaster. That is, assuming you own the harness and horse-drawn implements you would need.

If you think farming a small acreage with a team of horses would save money, forget it. I bought an old two-cycle John Deere for about half the price of an average team. It pulls a two-bottom plow, never gets tired, and doesn't eat if I don't use it. I can do my fieldwork for about \$20 worth of fuel per acre per year. And the feed a team would have eaten can fatten two more steers.

Exotic livestock

Don't be led down that path. I have a neighbor

What we raise and butcher annually

Our family consists of three active adults with good appetites. This list also allows for frequent company meals and a few well appreciated gifts at Christmastime:

50-60	Chickens
10	Ducks
6	Geese
6	Turkeys
4	250 lb. Hogs
1	1150 lb. Steer

You'll need to fine tune this list for your family, but it will give you a place to start.

three years ago spent the price of a new pickup getting into the emu business. Last month he happily sold out for the price of a used moped. There are very few things that make a lot of money on a small scale, especially without major investment in breeding stock or facilities.

Whether it's llamas, bison, elk, miniature horses, ostriches, or whatever, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. An old horse trader friend once told me, "Spend little money to make big money. Never spend big money to make little money." This advice has served me well for a lot of years.

These are the basics. You'll have to tailor your livestock mix to suit your farm and your menu. Remember, raise only what you want to eat. Also try not to have too large of a surplus. Livestock consumed at home has a retail or "meat-counter" value.

Livestock sold at the local auction barn has less than wholesale value.

Other considerations

One of the things I notice on well-thought-out farms is how each enterprise complements another. For instance, on our farm free-range chickens visit the cow yard daily. In the process of scratching the "cow-pies" apart in search of undigested grain, they also disrupt the maggot life cycle and help prevent flies. I've often watched our turkeys follow the cows around the field, eagerly eating insects that the cattle kick up and picking flies off the cattle when they lie down.

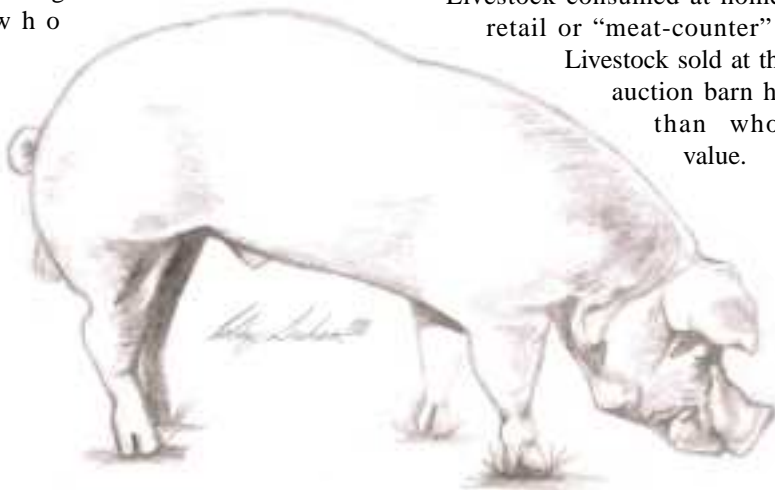
Geese eat a lot of grass but don't like broad leaves. We put this trait to use by letting them eat the grass out of the potato patch. They also reach into the woven wire fence and eat grass that the cattle can't reach.

Excess milk helps feed our pigs and chickens, and the pigs recycle a lot of otherwise wasted foodstuffs.

Keep in mind that if you don't have proper fencing and housing for each type of livestock, along with adequate feeding and watering equipment, you'll find your enterprise to be both unpleasant and unprofitable.

Also remember that if you want to be self-sufficient on your homestead, that is, raise all your own vegetables, fruit, meat, milk, eggs, and grain for both human and animal consumption, and if you also want to process, preserve, and store these foods, it's either a full-time job for one person or a part-time job for everyone in the family. Plan to spend fewer weekends fishing and more time cleaning the barn and hauling manure.

As a youngster, I sometimes resented the fact that I couldn't go fishing because I had to stay home and help butcher chickens or clean the hog house. After all, none of my friends had to do such things. However, looking back the greatest gift my parents ever gave me was the knowledge to live self-sufficiently and the self-confidence it inspired. Δ



Letters

(Dear Readers - Thank you for writing to Backwoods Home Magazine. The opinions and suggestions we receive from our readers are very important to us. We regret that we are no longer able to print or individually respond to every letter received due to the volume. We do read every letter received, and pass them along to the editor or writer concerned. We print a selection from our mail that best represents the views and concerns of our readers.

— The Editors)

Applause

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy your magazine. I had previously subscribed to the Survival Journal but all it seemed to have was guns, so as a woman I cancelled after a debate and somehow your wonderful magazine started coming. To one living up here in Alaska it seemed it is a godsend with information we can relate to, and as a woman it has so many other interesting departments and not all advertising. I usually don't write but you and your staff are to be commended for a wonderful "family" oriented and educational magazine. I lived in Gold Beach many, many years ago so using and seeing your address brings back a lot of memories. Thank you again.

Yvonne Newman, Fairbanks AK

Your magazine should be illegal! It is as addictive as any narcotic. I read each issue from cover to cover and "fiend" for a "fix" until the next one arrives.

Please begin to make this a weekly publication. Because as a bimonthly one, it is killing me.

Since I have your ear I have a couple of other requests.

First, would you consider doing an article on the climate zones? With a map showing each zone and some pros and cons of each. Along with growing seasons, temperature extremes, plants which do well in each, etc.

Second, I am interested in purchasing the book, "More Power to You" by H. Skip Thomsen. I no longer see it advertised in your mag. And can't find it in my Loompanics catalog either. Where can I purchase this valuable publication?

To Dave Duffy: way to go man!!

Never let "them" convince you to pull your punches. I know you won't!

Politically and philosophically we are birds of a feather.

Coming from the bottom of my Libertarian heart—"I love you, man!"

Keep up the great work.

Steve Greer, Dalhart, TX

The climate zones article is great idea. Look for it in the future. More Power to You can be found at www.mailbooks.com.

Dave

I renew just for John Silveira's articles. MacDougal is my hero!

Jeff Absher, Ocean Springs, MS

I first found you on line last year and had to have the print version. I'm only 23-years-old and I was beginning to feel like a bit of an outcast because of my views on a number of subjects (politics, education, self-reliance, firearms possession, etc.). I'm very happy to know that my fiancée and I are not alone. I'm a carpenter by trade so I read all your around the homestead articles with great interest. I also found myself agreeing with so many points raised in "The Coming American Dictatorship." It's content has caused a number of heated debates between my friends and me. Keep your gun clean and your powder dry.

Tony Vergura, Menands, NY

Pursuing excuses

There is a lingering philosophy of the inseparable brothers, namely, the liberal left and the hippie culture of the 60s which has invaded traditional American culture as handed down by the Founders of our Republic. This politically correct philosophy incorporates the antithesis that all wrongful acts are not necessarily the sole fault of the one(s) who commits the evil deed.

If one should choose to pursue excuses for justifying a wrongdoing, then an unending list is always readily available. It wasn't the rapist's fault; the victim asked for it, as she should have dressed more modestly. It wasn't the murderer's fault; society, inner frustration, home environment or an innumerable host of excuses are listed on the menu. Excuse me, but do people have a choice to do good or evil?

A woman drives through a fast food restaurant and orders coffee. As she departs, she spills the coffee on herself and gets burned. Why did it happen? Naturally, the "mean ole restaurant is to blame for giving her hot coffee." No matter what, it couldn't be her fault!

The article "My View" typically weaves through its content the same philosophical overtones and rhetoric as aforementioned, with the subterfuge that the September 11th atrocity couldn't possibly be a choice of evil people. The article states, "They keep telling us why, again and again..." as if to suggest that the perpetrator is truthful and the victim is clueless.

The same despicable ploy is used by clever lawyers who cloud the issue of who is really the criminal and who is the victim in a specific case of law.

I was raised in an Arab-American home and have been privileged to travel to the Middle East. As youngsters we were taught to hate the Jew. Why do we hate them? Because they're Jews! Fortunately, I became a

Christian later in life and became familiar with the politically incorrect book, called the Bible, which changed my hate to love for the Jewish people.

The Saudi Prince, who, with synthetic compassion attempted to salve his conscience by buying good will to America with his 10 million dollar donation, rightly got it thrown back in his face. How many of the terrorists were from Saudi? Case closed!

Your writer continues with suggestive overtones that the attack on the Twin Towers was simply a response to U.S. foreign policy and/or our presence in the region. Because of our presence? Who dug them out of the desert sand and made them wealthy nations?

In the early '20s, catastrophes hit Japan, and the country was on the brink of economic and national collapse. Who came to the rescue? Good 'ole Uncle Sam. Yet, less than 20 years later, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Was this just a response to U.S. foreign policy? The ground quakes with such absurdity as the founding fathers strive to cry out—Insane! Insane!

The article ends with the adamant words, "It should." The sadistic implication of such a closing lends itself to a leftist statement made by our former hippie generation President, William Clinton, "We need a new government for a new century..." That is a statement from a pro-socialistic agenda.

We do not need a new or different government. The founding fathers established a government, which has produced the greatest nation in history. No, we do not need a new one! We need a revival of the old one! Our government is far from perfect, but with mortal brings, it's the best thing going.

To appease the Arab world, all America needs to do is turn her back on Israel. The Arab world does not wish Israel to exist! America made a choice to support Israel, and the promise of God has been given to us,

"I will bless them that bless thee (Israel) and I will curse them that curse thee."

Thank you for allowing me to express my opinion on the matter of Sept 11th and alleged reasons for the same. You need not respond. Backwoods Home appears to be a good magazine.

Wayne Barkett, Pinetta, FL

It's interesting that you should lean so heavily on the Founding Fathers in your letter. It was Washington himself who, in his Farewell Address, warned against foreign entanglements and alliances and making other nations' problems our own problems. He said no good could come of this. I also wonder what the effect on American society would be if we meddled as actively in British/IRA affairs, or the Russian/Chechnya conflict, or the Tamil rebels?

As far as making them wealthy nations goes, all that cheap oil (even at today's prices, oil from the Middle East is relatively cheap) has made Western nations and Japan wealthier. So, it's been a two-way street. But no matter what, even if we made them wealthy, I'm not clear on how that entitles us to meddle with them.

Japan's near economic and national collapse in the early '20s is news to me, but I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. However, even if we did save them, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was a response to America's containment policy of the expanding Japanese Empire. Without getting into the imponderables of whether American policy was correct or not, it's pure foolishness to think it had no impact on the Japanese—unless one imagines that the Japanese got up one morning and said, "Let's attack either Costa Rica, Belgium, Argentina, Ethiopia, or America. Hmm, let's role the dice and see who the victim is."

As far as turning our back on Israel goes? Are we somehow responsible for them? Or the Pakistanis? Or the Brazilians? And if we are responsible

for some countries and not others, who chooses? (One other thing: until recent changes in the Middle East, Jews there have historically lived better under the Moslems than they had under Christians in Europe, who for centuries seemed to find great sport in running the Inquisition and concentration camps in World War II, among other things.)

The last thing I have to say is, maybe we should be playing world cop, or whatever it is we do, and Washington's Farewell Address be damned (no one reads it anymore, anyway). But, if that's what we want to do, let's stop kidding ourselves that our policies have no consequences, climb down from our self-righteous pulpits, and accept terrorism as part of the price.

John

I have just finished reading the final installment of John Silveira's "The Coming American Dictatorship" series. Although I missed the beginning of the series, the articles I did read, concerning the steady loss of our rights and freedoms, the rise of fascism in our government, etc, were right on target. However, I was disappointed with the cop-out ending in the final paragraphs, "Who's to blame?", and "Is there a solution?" John's answer (in the guise of his character "Mac") is there is no solution, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. So what was the point in writing the series if John feels the situation is hopeless? A big reason I buy and read this magazine is to feel like there is hope for the future. True, we (the American people) did fall asleep, and allow fascism's tentacle to encroach upon us. But the Declaration of Independence states that all people "...are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And "...whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish

it." We have come full circle and like King George III's government, the U.S. government today has plunged into absolute despotism. How we proceed at this point, I'm uncertain. Another violent, bloody revolution or civil war is the last thing I want, as did our Founding Fathers over 200 years ago. But it is a sad fact of history that no government, once it had accumulated excessive power, surrendered that power willingly or peacefully. Unfortunately, most revolutions resulted in even worse governments (i.e., the French and Russian Bolshevik revolutions). Ours was an exception. Looking around now, how much worse can things get? I don't think we have much freedom left to lose. If we choose not to do anything about it, and simply give up, as John seems to allude to at the conclusion of the article, and just enjoy our little socialist/fascist utopia. Or looking at it another way, to quote George Orwell's "1984," when the question is asked about the future of humanity

under a totalitarian dictatorship, the reply is, "Imagine a boot stomping on a human face forever."

Ray Parker, Spokane, WA

Please understand that I agree that there are things the American people can do about the encroaching American dictatorship. If you read the entire series closely you saw I cited quite a few solutions. What I *no longer* believe is that the American people will do them. The Americans of 200+ years ago are gone. Where are the Washingtons, Jeffersons, Adamsses, Masons, etc., of today? In 1776 it was they, the community leaders, who led the Revolution against a tyrant who lay across the ocean. Today, with the exception of a precious few, like Ron Paul of Texas, the community leaders are the tyrants, not some "foreign" king.

Some 200 years ago, when the Shawnee Indian chieftain, Tecumseh, tried to get the various tribes to enter into an alliance to resist the encroach-

ments of the white man, he had little trouble getting the young braves to agree with him. Where he ran into roadblocks was with the older braves and chiefs. They were opposed to resisting the white man because they were receiving annuities from the federal government and didn't want to shut off the spigot of goodies. It was because they were now dependent on the federal government that Tecumseh was doomed to fail.

Today, like the Indian chiefs of old, so many Americans believe they have a stake in the status quo that I am beginning to think it almost laughable that anyone thinks we, as a nation, are willing to change it. Oh, we're willing to demand changes in the goodies other Americans are getting from the government, but we want ours left alone. The voices of people like yours and mine are a frightfully small minority that are almost not heard. The result is that I don't expect anything to change for the better.

John

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